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POEMS

BY

JEAN INGELow





Jean Lydon

OXFORD EDITION

POEMS BY
JEAN INGELOW



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POEMS

(1863)

DIVIDED

I

AN empty sky, a world of heather,
Purple of foxglove, yellow of broom ;
We two among them wading together,
Shaking out honey, treading perfume.

Crowds of bees are giddy with clover,
Crowds of grasshoppers skip at our feet,
Crowds of larks at their matins hang over,
Thanking the Lord for a life so sweet.

Flusheth the rise with her purple favour,
Gloweth the cleft with her golden ring,
'Twixt the two brown butterflies waver,
Lightly settle, and sleepily swing.

We two walk till the purple dieth
And short dry grass under foot is brown,
But one little streak at a distance lieth
Green like a ribbon to prank the down.

II

Over the grass we stepped unto it,
And God He knoweth how blithe we were !
Never a voice to bid us eschew it :
Hey the green ribbon that showed so fair !

Hey the green ribbon ! we kneeled beside it,
We parted the grasses dewy and sheen ;
Drop over drop there filtered and slid
A tiny bright beck that trickled between.

Tinkle, tinkle, sweetly it sung to us,
 Light was our talk as of faëry bells—
 Faëry wedding-bells faintly rung to us
 Down in their fortunate parallels.

Hand in hand, while the sun peered over,
 We lapped the grass on that youngling spring ;
 Swept back its rushes, smoothed its clover,
 And said, ' Let us follow it westering.'

III

A dappled sky, a world of meadows,
 Circling above us the black rooks fly
 Forward, backward ; lo, their dark shadows
 Flit on the blossoming tapestry—

Flit on the beck, for her long grass parteth
 As hair from a maid's bright eyes blown back ;
 And, lo, the sun like a lover darteth
 His flattering smile on her wayward track.

Sing on ! we sing in the glorious weather
 Till one steps over the tiny strand,
 So narrow, in sooth, that still together
 On either brink we go hand in hand.

The beck grows wider, the hands must sever.
 On either margin, our songs all done,
 We move apart, while she singeth ever,
 Taking the course of the stooping sun.

He prays, ' Come over '—I may not follow ;
 I cry, ' Return '—but he cannot come :
 We speak, we laugh, but with voices hollow ;
 Our hands are hanging, our hearts are numb.

IV

A breathing sigh, a sigh for answer,
 A little talking of outward things :
 The careless beck is a merry dancer,
 Keeping sweet time to the air she sings.

A little pain when the beck grows wider ;
 ' Cross to me now—for her wavelets swell : '
 ' I may not cross '—and the voice beside her
 Faintly reacheth, though heeded well.

No backward path ; ah ! no returning ;
 No second crossing that ripple's flow :
 ' Come to me now, for the west is burning ;
 Come ere it darkens ; '—' Ah, no ! ah, no ! '

Then cries of pain, and arms outreaching—
 The beck grows wider and swift and deep :
 Passionate words as of one beseeching—
 The loud beck drowns them ; we walk, and weep.

V

A yellow moon in splendour drooping,
 A tired queen with her state oppressed,
 Low by rushes and swordgrass stooping,
 Lies she soft on the waves at rest.

The desert heavens have felt her sadness ;
 Her earth will weep her some dewy tears :
 The wild beck ends her tune of gladness,
 And goeth stilly as soul that fears.

We two walk on in our grassy places
 On either marge of the moonlit flood,
 With the moon's own sadness in our faces,
 Where joy is withered, blossom and bud.

VI

A shady freshness, chafers whirring,
 A little piping of leaf-hid birds ;
 A flutter of wings, a fitful stirring,
 A cloud to the eastward snowy as curds.

Bare grassy slopes, where kids are tethered,
 Round valleys like nests all fern-ylined ;
 Round hills, with fluttering tree-tops feathered,
 Swell high in their freckled robes behind.

A rose-flush tender, a thrill, a quiver,
When golden gleams to the tree-tops glide ;
A flashing edge for the milk-white river,
The beck, a river—with still sleek tide.

Broad and white, and polished as silver,
On she goes under fruit-laden trees ;
Sunk in leafage cooeth the culver,
And 'plaineth of love's disloyalties.

Glitters the dew and shines the river,
Up comes the lily and dries her bell ;
But two are walking apart for ever,
And wave their hands for a mute farewell.

VII

A braver swell, a swifter sliding ;
The river hasteth, her banks recede :
Wing-like sails on her bosom gliding
Bear down the lily and drown the reed.

Stately prows are rising and bowing
(Shouts of mariners winnow the air),
And level sands for banks endowing
The tiny green ribbon that showed so fair.

While, O my heart ! as white sails shiver,
And crowds are passing, and banks stretch wide,
How hard to follow, with lips that quiver,
That moving speck on the far-off side !

Farther, farther—I see it—know it—
My eyes brim over, it melts away :
Only my heart to my heart shall show it
As I walk desolate day by day.

VIII

And yet I know past all doubting, truly—
A knowledge greater than grief can dim—
I know, as he loved, he will love me duly—
Yea, better—e'en better than I love him.

And as I walk by the vast calm river,
 The awful river so dread to see,
 I say, 'Thy breadth and thy depth for ever
 Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me.'

HONOURS.—PART I

A Scholar is musing on his want of success.
To strive—and fail. Yes, I did strive and fail,
I set mine eyes upon a certain night
To find a certain star—and could not hail
With them its deep-set light.

Fool that I was ! I will rehearse my fault :
I, wingless, thought myself on high to lift
Among the winged—I set these feet that halt
To run against the swift.

And yet this man, that loved me so, can write—
That loves me, I would say, can let me see ;
Or fain would have me think he counts but light
These Honours lost to me.

[*The letter of his friend.*]

'What are they ? that old house of yours which gave
 Such welcomes oft to me, the sunbeams fall
 Still, down the squares of blue and white which pave
 Its hospitable hall.

'A brave old house ! a garden full of bees,
 Large dropping poppies, and Queen hollihocks,
 With butterflies for crowns—tree peonies
 And pinks and goldilocks.

'Go, when the shadow of your house is long
 Upon the garden—when some new-waked bird,
 Pecking and fluttering, chirps a sudden song,
 And not a leaf is stirred ;

‘ But every one drops dew from either edge
Upon its fellow, while an amber ray
Slants up among the tree-tops like a wedge
Of liquid gold—to play

‘ Over and under them, and so to fall
Upon that lane of water lying below—
That piece of sky let in, that you do call
A pond, but which I know

‘ To be a deep and wondrous world ; for I
Have seen the trees within it—marvellous things
So thick no bird betwixt their leaves could fly
But she would smite her wings ;—

‘ Go there, I say ; stand at the water’s brink,
And shoals of spotted grayling you shall see
Basking between the shadows—look, and think
“ This beauty is for me ;

‘ “ For me this freshness in the morning hours,
For me the water’s clear tranquillity ;
For me the soft descent of chestnut flowers ;
The cushat’s cry for me.

‘ “ The lovely laughter of the wind-swayed wheat ;
The easy slope of yonder pastoral hill ;
The sedgy brook whereby the red kine meet
And wade and drink their fill.”

‘ Then saunter down that terrace whence the sea
All fair with wing-like sails you may discern ;
Be glad, and say “ This beauty is for me—
A thing to love and learn.

‘ “ For me the bounding in of tides ; for me
The laying bare of sands when they retreat ;
The purple flush of calms, the sparkling glee
When waves and sunshine meet.”

‘ So, after gazing, homeward turn, and mount
To that long chamber in the roof ; there tell
Your heart the laid-up lore it holds to count
And prize and ponder well.

‘ The lookings onward of the race before
It had a past to make it look behind ;
Its reverent wonders, and its doubtings sore,
Its adorations blind.

‘ The thunder of its war-songs, and the glow
Of chants to freedom by the old world sung ;
The sweet love cadences that long ago
Dropped from the old-world tongue.

‘ And then this new-world lore that takes account
Of tangled star-dust ; maps the triple whirl
Of blue and red and argent worlds that mount
And greet the IRISH EARL ;

‘ Or float across the tube that HERSCHEL sways,
Like pale-rose chaplets, or like sapphire mist ;
Or hang or droop along the heavenly ways,
Like scarves of amethyst.

‘ O strange it is and wide the new-world lore,
For next it treateth of our native dust !
Must dig out buried monsters, and explore
The green earth’s fruitful crust ;

‘ Must write the story of her seething youth—
How lizards paddled in her lukewarm seas ;
Must show the cones she ripened, and forsooth
Count seasons on her trees ;

‘ Must know her weight, and pry into her age,
Count her old beach lines by their tidal swell ;
Her sunken mountains name, her craters gauge,
Her cold volcanoes tell ;

‘ And treat her as a ball, that one might pass
From this hand to the other—such a ball
As he could measure with a blade of grass,
And say it was but small !

‘ Honours ! O friend, I pray you bear with me :
The grass hath time to grow in meadow lands,
And leisurely the opal murmuring sea
Breaks on her yellow sands ;

‘ And leisurely the ring-dove on her nest
 Broods till her tender chick will peck the shell ;
 And leisurely down fall from ferny crest
 The dew-drops on the well ;

‘ And leisurely your life and spirit grew,
 With yet the time to grow and ripen free :
 No judgment past withdraws that boon from you,
 Nor granteth it to me.

‘ Still must I plod, and still in cities moil ;
 From precious leisure, learned leisure far,
 Dull my best self with handling common soil ;
 Yet mine those honours are.

‘ Mine they are called ; they are a name which means,
 “ This man had steady pulses, tranquil nerves ;
 Here, as in other fields, the most he gleans
 Who works and never swerves.

‘ “ We measure not his mind ; we cannot tell
 What lieth under, over, or beside
 The test we put him to ; he doth excel,
 We know, where he is tried ;

‘ “ But, if he boast some farther excellence—
 Mind to create as well as to attain ;
 To sway his peers by golden eloquence,
 As wind doth shift a fane ;

‘ “ To sing among the poets—we are nought :
 We cannot drop a line into that sea
 And read its fathoms off, nor gauge a thought,
 Nor map a simile.

‘ “ It may be of all voices sublunar
 The only one he echoes we did try ;
 We may have come upon the only star
 That twinkles in his sky.”

‘ And so it was with me.’

O false my friend !

*False, false, a random charge, a blame undue ;
 Wrest not fair reasoning to a crooked end :
 False, false, as you are true !*

But I read on : ‘ And so it was with me ;
Your golden constellations lying apart
They neither hailed nor greeted heartily,
Nor noted on their chart.

‘ And yet to you and not to me belong
Those finer instincts that, like second sight
And hearing, catch creation’s undersong,
And see by inner light.

‘ You are a well, whereon I, gazing, see
Reflections of the upper heavens—a well
From whence come deep, deep echoes up to me—
Some underwave’s low swell.

‘ I cannot soar into the heights you show,
Nor dive among the deeps that you reveal ;
But it is much that high things ARE to know,
That deep things ARE to feel.

‘ ’Tis yours, not mine, to pluck out of your breast
Some human truth, whose workings recondite
Were unattired in words, and manifest
And hold it forth to light

‘ And cry, “ Behold this thing that I have found.”
And though they knew not of it till that day,
Nor should have done with no man to expound
Its meaning, yet they say,

“ “ We do accept it : lower than the shoals
We skim, this diver went, nor did create,
But find it for us deeper in our souls
Than we can penetrate.”

‘ You were to me the world’s interpreter,
The man that taught me Nature’s unknown tongue,
And to the notes of her wild dulcimer
First set sweet words and sung.

‘ And what am I to you ? A steady hand
To hold, a steadfast heart to trust withal ;
Merely a man that loves you, and will stand
By you, whate’er befall.

‘ But need we praise his tendance tutelar

Who feeds a flame that warms him ? Yet ’tis true
I love you for the sake of what you are,
And not of what you do :—

‘ As heaven’s high twins, whereof in Tyrian blue

The one revolveth : through his course immense
Might love his fellow of the damask hue,
For like, and difference.

‘ For different pathways evermore decreed

To intersect, but not to interfere ;
For common goal, two aspects, and one speed,
One centre and one year ;

‘ For deep affinities, for drawings strong,

That by their nature each must needs exert ;
For loved alliance, and for union long,
That stands before desert.

‘ And yet desert makes brighter not the less,

For nearest his own star he shall not fail
To think those rays unmatched for nobleness,
That distance counts but pale.

‘ Be pale afar, since still to me you shine,

And must while Nature’s eldest law shall hold ;’—
*Ah, there ’s the thought which makes his random line
Dear as refinèd gold !*

Then shall I drink this draught of oxymel,

*Part sweet, part sharp ? Myself o’erprized to know
Is sharp ; the cause is sweet, and truth to tell
Few would that cause forgo,*

Which is, that this of all the men on earth

*Doth love me well enough to count me great—
To think my soul and his of equal girth—
O liberal estimate !*

And yet it is so ; he is bound to me,

*For human love makes aliens near of kin ;
By it I rise, there is equality :
I rise to thee, my twin.*

‘Take courage’—*courage ! ay, my purple peer,
I will take courage ; for thy Tyrian rays
Refresh me to the heart, and strangely dear
And healing is thy praise.*

‘Take courage,’ *quoth he,* ‘and respect the mind
Your Maker gave, for good your fate fulfil ;
The fate round many hearts your own to wind.’
Twin soul, I will ! I will !

HONOURS.—PART II

The Answer

As one who, journeying, checks the rein in haste
Because a chasm doth yawn across his way
Too wide for leaping, and too steeply faced
For climber to essay—

As such an one, being brought to sudden stand,
Doubts all his foregone path if ’t were the true,
And turns to this and then to the other hand
As knowing not what to do,—

So I, being checked, am with my path at strife
Which led to such a chasm, and there doth end.
False path ! it cost me priceless years of life,
My well-beloved friend.

There fell a flute when Ganymede went up—
The flute that he was wont to play upon :
It dropped beside the jonquil’s milk-white cup,
And freckled cowslips wan—

Dropped from his heedless hand when, dazed and mute,
He sailed upon the eagle’s quivering wing,
Aspiring, panting—ay, it dropped—the flute
Erewhile a cherished thing.

Among the delicate grasses and the bells
Of crocuses that spotted a rill side,
I picked up such a flute, and its clear swells
To my young lips replied.

I played thereon, and its response was sweet ;
But lo, they took from me that solacing reed.
‘ O shame ! ’ they said ; ‘ such music is not meet ;
Go up like Ganymede.

‘ Go up, despise these humble grassy things,
Sit on the golden edge of yonder cloud.’
Alas ! though ne’er for me those eagle wings
Stooped from their eyrie proud.

My flute ! and flung away its echoes sleep ;
But as for me, my life-pulse beateth low :
And like a last-year’s leaf enshrouded deep
Under the drifting snow,

Or like some vessel wrecked upon the sand
Of torrid swamps, with all her merchandise,
And left to rot betwixt the sea and land,
My helpless spirit lies.

Rueing, I think for what then was I made ;
What end appointed for—what use designed ?
Now let me right this heart that was bewrayed—
Unveil these eyes gone blind.

My well-beloved friend, at noon to-day
Over our cliffs a white mist lay unfurled,
So thick, one standing on their brink might say,
Lo, here doth end the world.

A white abyss beneath, and nought beside ;
Yet, hark ! a cropping sound not ten feet down :
Soon I could trace some browsing lambs that hied
Through rock-paths cleft and brown.

And here and there green tufts of grass peered through,
Salt lavender, and sea thrift ; then behold,
The mist, subsiding ever, bared to view
A beast of giant mould.

She seemed a great sea monster lying content
With all her cubs about her : but deep—deep—
The subtle mist went floating ; its descent
Showed the world’s end was steep.

It shook, it melted, shaking more, till, lo,
The sprawling monster was a rock ; her brood
Were boulders, whereon seamews white as snow
Sat watching for their food.

Then once again it sank, its day was done :
Part rolled away, part vanished utterly,
And glimmering softly under the white sun,
Behold ! a great white sea.

O that the mist which veileth my To-come
Would so dissolve and yield unto mine eyes
A worthy path ! I 'd count not wearisome
Long toil, nor enterprise,

But strain to reach it ; ay, with wrestlings stout
And hopes that even in the dark will grow
(Like plants in dungeons, reaching feelers out),
And ploddings wary and slow.

Is there such path already made to fit
The measure of my foot ? It shall atone
For much, if I at length may light on it
And know it for mine own.

But is there none ? why, then, 'tis more than well :
And glad at heart myself will hew one out,
Let me be only sure ; for, sooth to tell,
The sorest dole is doubt—

Doubt, a blank twilight of the heart, which mars
All sweetest colours in its dimness same ;
A soul-mist, through whose rifts familiar stars
Beholding, we misname.

A ripple on the inner sea, which shakes
Those images that on its breast reposed ;
A fold upon a wind-swayed flag, that breaks
The motto it disclosed.

O doubt ! O doubt ! I know my destiny ;
I feel thee fluttering bird-like in my breast ;
I cannot loose, but I will sing to thee,
And flatter thee to rest.

There is no certainty, my bosom's guest,
No proving for the things whereof ye wot ;
For, like the dead to sight unmanifest,
They are, and they are not.

But surely as they are, for God is truth,
And as they are not, for we saw them die,
So surely from the heaven drops light for youth,
If youth will walk thereby.

And can I see this light ? It may be so ;
' But see it thus and thus,' my fathers said.
The living do not rule this world ; ah no !
It is the dead, the dead.

Shall I be slave to every noble soul,
Study the dead, and to their spirits bend ;
Or learn to read my own heart's folded scroll,
And make self-rule my end ?

Thought from *without*—O shall I take on trust,
And life from others modelled steal or win ;
Or shall I heave to light, and clear of rust
My true life from *within* ?

O, let me be myself ! But where, O where,
Under this heap of precedent, this mound
Of customs, modes, and maxims, cumbrance rare,
Shall the Myself be found ?

O thou *Myself*, thy fathers thee debarred
None of their wisdom, but their folly came
Therewith ; they smoothed thy path, but made it hard
For thee to quit the same.

With glosses they obscured God's natural truth,
And with tradition tarnished His revealed ;
With vain protections they endangered youth,
With layings bare they sealed.

What aileth thee, myself ? Alas ! thy hands
Are tired with old opinions—heir and son,
Thou hast inherited thy father's lands
And all his debts thereon.

O that some power would give me Adam's eyes !
O for the straight simplicity of Eve !
For I see nought, or grow, poor fool, too wise
With seeing to believe.

Exemplars may be heaped until they hide
The rules that they were made to render plain ;
Love may be watched, her nature to decide,
Until love's self doth wane.

Ah me ! and when forgotten and foregone
We leave the learning of departed days,
And cease the generations past to con,
Their wisdom and their ways—

When fain to learn we lean into the dark,
And grope to feel the floor of the abyss,
Or find the secret boundary lines which
Where soul and matter kiss—

Fair world ! these puzzled souls of ours grow weak
With beating their bruised wings against the rim
That bounds their utmost flying, when they seek
The distant and the dim.

We pant, we strain like birds against their wires ;
Are sick to reach the vast and the beyond ;—
And what avails, if still to our desires
Those far-off gulfs respond ?

Contentment comes not therefore ; still there lies
An outer distance when the first is hailed,
And still for ever yawns before our eyes
An **UTMOST**—that is veiled.

Searching those edges of the universe,
We leave the central fields a fallow part ;
To feed the eye more precious things amerce,
And starve the darkened heart.

Then all goes wrong : the old foundations rock ;
One scorns at him of old who gazed unshod ;
One striking with a pickaxe thinks the shock
Shall move the seat of God.

A little way, a very little way
 (Life is so short), they dig into the rind,
And they are very sorry, so they say,—
 Sorry for what they find.

But truth is sacred—aye, and must be told :
 There is a story long beloved of man ;
We must forgo it, for it will not hold—
 Nature had no such plan.

And then, ‘ if God hath said it,’ some should cry,
 ‘ We have the story from the fountain-head : ’
Why, then, what better than the old reply,
 The first ‘ Yea, HATH God said ? ’

The garden, O the garden, must it go,
 Source of our hope and our most dear regret ?
The ancient story, must it no more show
 How man may win it yet ?

And all upon the Titan child’s decree,
 The baby science, born but yesterday,
That in its rash unlearned infancy
 With shells and stones at play,

And delving in the outworks of this world,
 And little crevices that it could reach,
Discovered certain bones laid up, and furled
 Under an ancient beach,

And other waifs that lay to its young mind
 Some fathoms lower than they ought to lie,
By gain whereof it could not fail to find
 Much proof of ancients’ry,

Hints at a pedigree withdrawn and vast,
 Terrible deeps, and old obscurities,
Or soulless origin, and twilight passed
 In the primeval seas,

Whereof it tells, as thinking it hath been
 Of truth not meant for man inheritor ;
As if this knowledge Heaven had ne’er foreseen
 And not provided for !

Knowledge ordained to live : although the fate
Of much that went before it was—to die,
And be called ignorance by such as wait
Till the next drift comes by.

O marvellous credulity of man !
If God indeed kept secret, couldst thou know
Or follow up the mighty Artisan
Unless He willed it so ?

And canst thou of the Maker think in sooth
That of the Made He shall be found at fault,
And dream of wresting from Him hidden truth
By force or by assault ?

But if He keeps not secret—if thine eyes
He openeth to His wondrous work of late—
Think how in soberness thy wisdom lies,
And have the grace to wait.

Wait, nor against the half-learned lesson fret,
Nor chide at old belief as if it erred,
Because thou canst not reconcile as yet
The Worker and the word.

Either the Worker did in ancient days
Give us the word, His tale of love and might ;
(And if in truth He gave it us, who says
He did not give it right ?)

Or else He gave it not, and then indeed
We know not if HE IS—by whom our years
Are portioned, who the orphan moons doth lead,
And the unfathered spheres.

We sit unowned upon our burial sod,
And know not whence we come or whose we be,
Comfortless mourners for the mount of God,
The rocks of Calvary :

Bereft of heaven, and of the long-loved page
Wrought us by some who thought with death to cope ;
Despairing comforters, from age to age
Sowing the seeds of hope :

Gracious deceivers, who have lifted us
Out of the slough where passed our unknown youth ;
Beneficent liars, who have gifted us
With sacred love of truth !

Farewell to them : yet pause ere thou unmoor
And set thine ark adrift on unknown seas ;
How wert thou bettered so, or more secure
Thou, and thy destinies ?

And if thou searchest, and art made to fear
Facing of unread riddles dark and hard,
And mastering not their majesty austere,
Their meaning locked and barred :

How would it make the weight and wonder less,
If, lifted from immortal shoulders down,
The worlds were cast on seas of emptiness
In realms without a crown,

And (if there were no God) were left to rue
Dominion of the air and of the fire ?
Then if there be a God, ' Let God be true,
And every man a liar.'

But as for me, I do not speak as one
That is exempt : I am with life at feud :
My heart reproacheth me, as there were none
Of so small gratitude.

Wherewith shall I console thee, heart o' mine,
And still thy yearning and resolve thy doubt ?
That which I know, and that which I divine,
Alas ! have left thee out.

I have aspired to know the might of God,
As if the story of His love was furled,
Nor sacred foot the grasses e'er had trod
Of this redeemed world :—

Have sunk my thoughts as lead into the deep,
To grope for that abyss whence evil grew,
And spirits of ill, with eyes that cannot weep
Hungry and desolate flew ;

As if their legions did not one day crowd
The death-pangs of the Conquering Good to see !
As if a sacred head had never bowed
In death for man—for me !

Nor ransomed back the souls beloved, the sons
Of men, from thralldom with the nether kings
In that dark country where those evil ones
Trail their unhallowed wings.

And didst Thou love the race that loved not Thee,
And didst Thou take to heaven a human brow ?
Dost plead with man's voice by the marvellous sea ?
Art Thou his kinsman now ?

O God, O kinsman loved, but not enough !
O man, with eyes majestic after death,
Whose feet have toiled along our pathways rough
Whose lips drawn human breath !

By that one likeness which is ours and Thine,
By that one nature which doth hold us kin,
By that high heaven where, sinless Thou dost shine
To draw us sinners in,

By Thy last silence in the judgement-hall,
By long foreknowledge of the deadly tree,
By darkness, by the wormwood and the gall,
I pray Thee visit me.

Come, lest this heart should, cold and cast away,
Die ere the guest adored she entertain—
Lest eyes which never saw Thine earthly day
Should miss Thy heavenly reign.

Come weary-eyed from seeking in the night
Thy wanderers strayed upon the pathless wold,
Who wounded, dying, cry to Thee for light,
And cannot find their fold.

And deign, O Watcher, with the sleepless brow,
Pathetic in its yearning—deign reply :
Is there, O is there aught that such as Thou
Wouldst take from such as I ?

Are there no briars across Thy pathway thrust ?
 Are there no thorns that compass it about ?
 Nor any stones that Thou wilt deign to trust
 My hands to gather out ?

O, if Thou wilt, and if such bliss might be,
 It were a cure for doubt, regret, delay—
 Let my lost pathway go—what aileth me ?—
 There is a better way.

What though unmarked the happy workman toil,
 And break unthanked of man the stubborn clod ?
 It is enough, for sacred is the soil,
 Dear are the hills of God.

Far better in its place the lowliest bird
 Should sing aright to Him the lowliest song,
 Than that a seraph strayed should take the word
 And sing His glory wrong.

Friend, it is time to work. I say to thee,
 Thou dost all earthly good by much excel ;
 Thou and God's blessing are enough for me :
 My work, my work—farewell !

REQUIESCAT IN PACE !

O MY heart, my heart is sick awishing and awaiting :
 The lad took up his knapsack, he went, he went his
 way ;
 And I looked on for his coming, as a prisoner through the
 grating
 Looks and longs and longs and wishes for its opening
 day.

On the wild purple mountains, all alone with no other,
 The strong terrible mountains, he longed, he longed
 to be ;
 And he stooped to kiss his father, and he stooped to kiss
 his mother,
 And till I said ' Adieu, sweet Sir,' he quite forgot me.

He wrote of their white raiment, the ghostly capes that
screen them,
Of the storm winds that beat them, their thunder-rents
and scars,
And the paradise of purple, and the golden slopes atween
them,
And fields, where grow God's gentian bells, and His
crocus stars.

He wrote of frail gauzy clouds, that drop on them like
fleeces,
And make green their fir forests, and feed their mosses
hoar ;
Or come sailing up the valleys, and get wrecked and go
to pieces,
Like sloops against their cruel strength : then he wrote
no more.

O the silence that came next, the patience and long
aching !

They never said so much as ' He was a dear-loved son ' ;
Not the father to the mother moaned, that dreary still-
ness breaking :

Ah ! wherefore did he leave us so—this, our only
one ? '

They sat within, as waiting, until the neighbours prayed
them,

At Cromer, by the sea-coast, 't were peace and change
to be ;

And to Cromer, in their patience, or that urgency affrayed
them,

Or because the tidings tarried, they came, and took me.

It was three months and over since the dear lad had
started :

On the green downs at Cromer I sat to see the view ;
On an open space of herbage, where the ling and fern
had parted,

Betwixt the tall white lighthouse towers the old and
the new.

Below me lay the wide sea, the scarlet sun was stooping,
And he dyed the waste water, as with a scarlet dye ;
And he dyed the lighthouse towers ; every bird with
white wing swooping
Took his colours, and the cliffs did, and the yawning
sky.

Over grass came that strange flush, and over ling and
heather,
Over flocks of sheep and lambs, and over Cromer
town ;
And each filmy cloudlet crossing drifted like a scarlet
feather
Torn from the folded wings of clouds, while he settled
down.

When I looked, I dared not sigh :—In the light of God's
splendour,
With His daily blue and gold, who am I ? what am I ?
But that passion and outpouring seemed an awful sign
and tender,
Like the blood of the Redeemer, shown on earth and
sky.

O for comfort, O the waste of a long doubt and trouble !
On that sultry August eve trouble had made me meek ;
I was tired of my sorrow—O so faint, for it was double
In the weight of its oppression, that I could not speak !

And a little comfort grew, while the dimmed eyes were
feeding,
And the dull ears with murmur of waters satisfied ;
But a dream came slowly nigh me, all my thoughts and
fancy leading
Across the bounds of waking life to the other side.

And I dreamt that I looked out, to the waste waters
turning,
And saw the flakes of scarlet from wave to wave tossed
on ;
And the scarlet mix with azure, where a heap of gold lay
burning
On the clear remote sea reaches ; for the sun was gone.

Then I thought a far-off shout dropped across the still
water—

A question as I took it, for soon an answer came
From the tall white ruined lighthouse : ‘ If it be the old
man’s daughter

That we wot of,’ ran the answer, ‘ what then—who ’s
to blame ? ’

I looked up at the lighthouse all roofless and storm-broken :

A great white bird sat on it, with neck stretched out
to sea ;

Unto somewhat which was sailing in a skiff the bird
had spoken,

And a trembling seized my spirit, for they talked of me.

I was the old man’s daughter, the bird went on to name him ;

‘ He loved to count the starlings as he sat in the sun ;
Long ago he served with Nelson, and his story did not
shame him :

Ay, the old man was a good man—and his work was
done.’

The skiff was like a crescent, ghost of some moon departed,

Frail, white, she rocked and curtsied as the red
wave she crossed,

And the thing within sat paddling, and the crescent
dipped and darted,

Flying on, again was shouting, but the words were lost.

I said, ‘ That thing is hooded ; I could hear but that
floweth

The great hood below its mouth : ’ then the bird made
reply,

‘ If they know not, more ’s the pity, for the little shrew-
mouse knoweth,

And the kite knows, and the eagle, and the glead
and pye.’

And he stooped to whet his beak on the stones of the
coping ;

And when once more the shout came, in querulous
tones he spake,

‘ What I said was “ more ’s the pity ” ; if the heart be
long past hoping,

Let it say of death, “ I know it,” or doubt on and break.

‘ Men must die—one dies by day, and near him moans
his mother,

They dig his grave, tread it down, and go from it full
loth :

And one dies about the midnight, and the wind moans,
and no other,

And the snows give him a burial—and God loves them
both.

‘ The first hath no advantage—it shall not soothe his
slumber

That a lock of his brown hair his father ay shall keep ;
For the last, he nothing grudgeth, it shall nought his
quiet cumber.

That in a golden mesh of HIS callow eaglets sleep.

‘ Men must die when all is said, e’en the kite and glead
know it,

And the lad’s father knew it, and the lad, the lad too ;
It was never kept a secret, waters bring it and winds
blow it,

And he met it on the mountain—why then make ado ? ’

With that he spread his white wings, and swept across
the water,

Lit upon the hooded head, and it and all went down :
And they laughed as they went under, and I woke, ‘ the
old man’s daughter,’

And looked across the slope of grass, and at Cromer
town.

And I said, ‘ Is that the sky, all grey and silver suited ? ’

And I thought, ‘ Is that the sea that lies so white and
wan ?

I have dreamed as I remember : give me time—I was
reputed

Once to have a steady courage—O, I fear ’tis gone ! ’

And I said, ‘ Is this my heart ? if it be, low ’tis beating,

So he lies on the mountain, hard by the eagles’ brood ;
I have had a dream this evening, while the white and
gold were fleeting,

But I need not, need not tell it—where would be the
good ?

' Where would be the good to them, his father and his mother ?

For the ghost of their dead hope appeareth to them still.

While a lonely watchfire smoulders, who its dying red would smother,

That gives what little light there is to a darksome hill ? '

I rose up, I made no moan, I did not cry nor falter,
But slowly in the twilight I came to Cromer town.

What can wringing of the hands do that which is ordained to alter ?

He had climbed, had climbed the mountain, he would ne'er come down.

But, O my first, O my best, I could not choose but love thee :

O, to be a wild white bird, and seek thy rocky bed !

From my breast I'd give thee burial, pluck the down and spread above thee ;

I would sit and sing thy requiem on the mountain head.

Fare thee well, my love of loves ! would I had died before thee !

O, to be at least a cloud, that near thee I might flow,
Solemnly approach the mountain, weep away my being o'er thee,

And veil thy breast with icicles, and thy brow with snow !

SUPPER AT THE MILL

MOTHER

WELL, Frances.

FRANCES

Well, good mother, how are you ?

M. I'm hearty, lass, but warm ; the weather 's warm :
I think 'tis mostly warm on market days.

I met with George behind the mill : said he,
' Mother, go in and rest awhile.'

F. Ay, do,

And stay to supper ; put your basket down.

M. Why, now, it is not heavy ?

F. Willie, man,
Get up and kiss your Granny. Heavy, no !
Some call good churning luck ; but, luck or skill,
Your butter mostly comes as firm and sweet 10
As if 'twas Christmas. So you sold it all ?

M. All but this pat that I put by for George ;
He always loved my butter.

F. That he did.

M. And has your speckled hen brought off her brood ?

F. Not yet ; but that old duck I told you of,
She hatched eleven out of twelve to-day.

Child. And, Granny, they're so yellow.

M. Ay, my lad,
Yellow as gold—yellow as Willie's hair.

C. They're all mine, Granny—father says they're
mine.

M. To think of that !

F. Yes, Granny, only think ! 20
Why, father means to sell them when they're fat,
And put the money in the savings bank,
And all against our Willie goes to school :
But Willie would not touch them—no, not he ;
He knows that father would be angry else.

C. But I want one to play with—O, I want
A little yellow duck to take to bed !

M. What ! would ye rob the poor old mother, then ?

F. Now, Granny, if you'll hold the babe awhile ;
'Tis time I took up Willie to his crib. 30

[*Exit FRANCES.*]

[*Mother sings to the infant.*]

Playing on the virginals,
Who but I ? Sae glad, sae free,
Smelling for all cordials,
The green mint and marjorie ;
Set among the budding broom,
Kingeup and daffodilly,
By my side I made him room :
O love my Willie !

' Like me, love me, girl o' gowd,'
Sang he to my nimble strain ;
Sweet his ruddy lips o'erflowed
Till my heartstrings rang again :

By the broom, the bonny broom,
 Kingcup and daffodilly,
 In my heart I made him room :
 O love my Willie !

‘ Pipe and play, dear heart,’ sang he,
 ‘ I must go, yet pipe and play ;
 Soon I’ll come and ask of thee
 For an answer yea or nay ;’
 And I waited till the flocks
 Panted in yon waters stilly,
 And the corn stood in the shocks
 O love my Willie !

50

I thought first when thou didst come
 I would wear the ring for thee,
 But the year told out its sum
 Ere again thou sat’st by me ;
 Thou hadst nought to ask that day
 By kingcup and daffodilly ;
 I said neither yea nor nay :
 O love my Willie !

60

Enter GEORGE

G. Well, mother, ’tis a fortnight now, or more,
 Since I set eyes on you.

M. Ay, George, my dear,
 I reckon you ’ve been busy : so have we.

G. And how does father ?

M. He gets through his work,
 But he grows stiff, a little stiff, my dear ;
 He ’s not so young, you know, by twenty years
 As I am—not so young by twenty years,
 And I’m past sixty.

G. Yet he ’s hale and stout,
 And seems to take a pleasure in his pipe ;
 And seems to take a pleasure in his cows,
 And a pride, too.

70

M. And well he may, my dear.

G. Give me the little one, he tires your arm ;
 He ’s such a kicking, crowing, wakeful rogue,
 He almost wears our lives out with his noise
 Just at day-dawning, when we wish to sleep.
 What ! you young villain, would you clench your fist
 In father’s curls ? a dusty father, sure,
 And you’re as clean as wax.

G. No, mother, not at all ;
But Hannah must not keep our Fanny long—
She spoils her.

M. Ah ! folks spoil their children now ;
When I was a young woman 'twas not so ;
We made our children fear us, made them work,
Kept them in order.

G. Were not proud of them—
Eh, mother ?

M. I set store by mine, 'tis true, 120
But then I had good cause.

G. My lad, d'ye hear ?
Your Granny was not proud, by no means proud !
She never spoilt your father—no, not she,
Nor ever made him sing at harvest-home,
Nor at the forge, nor at the baker's shop,
Nor to the doctor while she lay abed
Sick, and he crept upstairs to share her broth.

M. Well, well, you were my youngest, and, what 's
more,
Your father loved to hear you sing—he did,
Although, good man, he could not tell one tune 130
From the other.

F. No, he got his voice from you :
Do use it, George, and send the child to sleep.

G. What must I sing ?

F. The ballad of the man
That is so shy he cannot speak his mind.

G. Ay, of the purple grapes and crimson leaves ;
But, mother, put your shawl and bonnet off.
And, Frances, lass, I brought some cresses in :
Just wash them, toast the bacon, break some eggs,
And let 's to supper shortly.

[*Sings.*]

My neighbour White—we met to-day— 140

He always had a cheerful way,

As if he breathed at ease ;

My neighbour White lives down the glade,

And I live higher, in the shade

Of my old walnut-trees.

So many lads and lasses small,

To feed them all, to clothe them all,

Must surely tax his wit ;

I see his thatch when I look out,
His branching roses creep about,
And vines half smother it. 150

There white-haired urchins climb his eaves,
And little watch-fires heap with leaves,
And milky filberts hoard ;
And there his oldest daughter stands
With downcast eyes and skilful hands
Before her ironing-board.

She comforts all her mother's days,
And with her sweet obedient ways
She makes her labour light ; 160
So sweet to hear, so fair to see !
O, she is much too good for me,
That lovely Lettice White !

'Tis hard to feel oneself a fool !
With that same lass I went to school—
I then was great and wise ;
She read upon an easier book,
And I—I never cared to look
Into her shy blue eyes.

And now I know they must be there, 170
Sweet eyes, behind those lashes fair
That will not raise their rim :
If maids be shy, he cures who can ;
But if a man be shy—a man—
Why then the worse for him !

My mother cries, ' For such a lad
A wife is easy to be had
And always to be found ;
A finer scholar scarce can be,
And for a foot and leg,' says she, 180
' He beats the country round !

' My handsome boy must stoop his head
To clear her door whom he would wed.'
Weak praise, but fondly sung !
' O mother ! scholars sometimes fail—
And what can foot and leg avail
To him that wants a tongue ? '

When by her ironing-board I sit,
Her little sisters round me flit, 190
And bring me forth their store ;
Dark cluster grapes of dusty blue,
And small sweet apples bright of hue
And crimson to the core.

But she abideth silent, fair,
 All shaded by her flaxen hair
 The blushes come and go ;
 I look, and I no more can speak
 Than the red sun that on her cheek
 Smiles as he lieth low.

Sometimes the roses by the latch 200
 Or scarlet vine-leaves from her thatch
 Come sailing down like birds ;
 When from their drifts her board I clear,
 She thanks me, but I scarce can hear
 The shyly uttered words.

Oft have I wooed sweet Lettice White
 By daylight and by candlelight
 When we two were apart.
 Some better day come on apace,
 And let me tell her face to face, 210
 ‘ Maiden, thou hast my heart.’

How gently rock yon poplars high
 Against the reach of primrose sky
 With heaven’s pale candles stored !
 She sees them all, sweet Lettice White ;
 I’ll e’en go sit again to-night
 Beside her ironing-board !

Why, you young rascal ! who would think it, now ?
 No sooner do I stop than you look up.
 What would you have your poor old father do ? 220
 ’Twas a brave song, long-winded, and not loud.

M. He heard the bacon sputter on the fork,
 And heard his mother’s step across the floor.
 Where did you get that song ?—’tis new to me.

G. I bought it of a pedlar.

M. Did you so ?

Well, you were always for the love-songs, George.

F. My dear, just lay his head upon your arm,
 And if you’ll pace and sing two minutes more
 He needs must sleep—his eyes are full of sleep.

G. Do you sing, mother.

F. Ay, good mother, do ; 230

’Tis long since we have heard you.

M. Like enough ;

I’m an old woman, and the girls and lads
 I used to sing to sleep o’ertop me now.
 What should I sing for ?

SCHOLAR AND CARPENTER

WHILE ripening corn grew thick and deep,
 And here and there men stood to reap,
 One morn I put my heart to sleep,
 And to the lanes I took my way.
 The goldfinch on a thistle-head
 Stood scattering seedlets while she fed ;
 The wrens their pretty gossip spread,
 Or joined a random roundelay

On hanging cobwebs shone the dew,
 And thick the wayside clovers grew ;
 The feeding bee had much to do,
 So fast did honey-drops exude :
 She sucked and murmured, and was gone,
 And lit on other blooms anon,
 The while I learned a lesson on
 The source and sense of quietude.

For sheep-bells chiming from a wold,
 Or bleat of lamb within its fold,
 Or cooing of love-legends old
 To dove-wives make not quiet less ;
 Ecstatic chirp of wingèd thing,
 Or bubbling of the water-spring,
 Are sounds that more than silence bring
 Itself and its delightsomeness.

While thus I went to gladness fain,
 I had but walked a mile or twain
 Before my heart woke up again,
 As dreaming she had slept too late ;
 The morning freshness that she viewed
 With her own meanings she endued,
 And touched with her solicitude
 The natures she did meditate.

‘ If quiet is, for it I wait ;
 To it, ah ! let me wed my fate,
 And, like a sad wife, supplicate
 My roving lord no more to flee ;
 If leisure is—but, ah ! ’tis not—
 ’Tis long past praying for, God wot ;
 The fashion of it men forgot,
 About the age of chivalry.

‘ Sweet is the leisure of the bird ;
 She craves no time for work deferred ;
 Her wings are not to aching stirred
 Providing for her helpless ones.
 Fair is the leisure of the wheat ;
 All night the damps about it fleet ;
 All day it basketh in the heat,
 And grows, and whispers orisons.

‘ Grand is the leisure of the earth ;
 She gives her happy myriads birth,
 And after harvest fears not dearth,
 But goes to sleep in snow-wreaths dim.
 Dread is the leisure up above
 The while He sits whose name is Love,
 And waits, as Noah did, for the dove,
 To wit if she would fly to him.

‘ He waits for us, while, houseless things,
 We beat about with bruised wings
 On the dark floods and water-springs,
 The ruined world, the desolate sea ;
 With open windows from the prime
 All night, all day, He waits sublime,
 Until the fullness of the time
 Decreed from His eternity.

‘ Where is OUR leisure ?—Give us rest.
 Where is the quiet we possessed ?
 We must have had it once—were blest
 With peace whose phantoms yet entice.
 Sorely the mother of mankind
 Longed for the garden left behind ;
 For we still prove some yearnings blind
 Inherited from Paradise.’

‘ Hold, heart ! ’ I cried ; ‘ for trouble sleeps ;
I hear no sound of aught that weeps ;
I will not look into thy deeps—

I am afraid, I am afraid ! ’

‘ Afraid ! ’ she saith ; ‘ and yet ’tis true
That what man dreads he still should view—
Should do the thing he fears to do,
And storm the ghosts in ambuscade.’

‘ What good ? ’ I sigh. ‘ Was reason meant
To straighten branches that are bent,
Or soothe an ancient discontent,

The instinct of a race dethroned ?
Ah ! doubly should that instinct go
Must the four rivers cease to flow,
Nor yield those rumours sweet and low
Wherewith man’s life is undertoned.’

‘ Yet had I but the past,’ she cries,
‘ And it was lost, I would arise
And comfort me some other wise.

But more than loss about me clings :
I am but restless with my race ;
The whispers from a heavenly place,
Once dropped among us, seem to chase
Rest with their prophet-visitings.

‘ The race is like a child, as yet
Too young for all things to be set
Plainly before him with no let
Or hindrance meet for his degree ;
But ne’ertheless by much too old
Not to perceive that men withhold
More of the story than is told,
And so infer a mystery.

‘ If the Celestials daily fly
With messages on missions high,
And float, our masts and turrets nigh,
Conversing on Heaven’s great intents ;
What wonder hints of coming things,
Whereto man’s hope and yearning clings,
Should drop like feathers from their wings
And give us vague presentiments ?

‘ And as the waxing moon can take
The tidal waters in her wake
And lead them round and round to break
Obedient to her drawings dim ;
So may the movements of His mind,
The first Great Father of mankind,
Affect with answering movements blind,
And draw the souls that breathe by Him.

‘ We had a message long ago
That like a river peace should flow,
And Eden bloom again below.
We heard, and we began to wait :
Full soon that message men forgot ;
Yet waiting is their destined lot,
And waiting for they know not what
They strive with yearnings passionate.

‘ Regret and faith alike enchain ;
There was a loss, there comes a gain ;
We stand at fault betwixt the twain,
And that is veiled for which we pant.
Our lives are short, our ten times seven ;
We think the councils held in heaven
Sit long, ere yet that blissful leaven
Work peace amongst the militant.

‘ Then we blame God that sin should be :
Adam began it at the tree,
“ The woman whom THOU gavest me ; ”
And we adopt his dark device.
O long Thou tarriest ! come and reign,
And bring forgiveness in Thy train,
And give us in our hands again
The apples of Thy Paradise.’

‘ Far-seeing heart ! if that be all,
The happy things that did not fall,’
I sighed, ‘ from every coppice call,
They never from that garden went.
Behold their joy, so comfort thee,
Behold the blossom and the bee,
For they are yet as good and free
As when poor Eve was innocent.

' But reason thus : " If we sank low,
If the lost garden we forgo,
Each in his day, nor ever know
But in our poet souls its face ;
Yet we may rise until we reach
A height untold of in its speech—
A lesson that it could not teach
Learn in this darker dwelling-place."

' And reason on : " We take the spoil ;
Loss made us poets, and the soil
Taught us great patience in our toil,
And life is kin to God through death.
Christ were not One with us but so,
And if bereft of Him we go ;
Dearer the heavenly mansions grow,
His home, to man that wandereth."

' Content thee so, and ease thy smart.'
With that she slept again, my heart,
And I admired and took my part
With crowds of happy things the while :
With open velvet butterflies
That swung and spread their peacock eyes,
As if they cared no more to rise
From off their beds of camomile.

The blackcaps in an orchard met,
Praising the berries while they ate :
The finch that flew her beak to whet
Before she joined them on the tree :
The water mouse among the reeds—
His bright eyes glancing black as beads,
So happy with a bunch of seeds—
I felt their gladness heartily.

But I came on, I smelt the hay,
And up the hills I took my way,
And down them still made holiday,
And walked, and wearied not a whit ;
But ever with the lane I went
Until it dropped with steep descent,
Cut deep into the rock, a tent
Of maple branches roofing it.

Adown the rock small runlets wept,
And reckless ivies leaned and crept,
And little spots of sunshine slept

On its brown steeps and made them fair ;
And broader beams athwart it shot,
Where martins cheeped in many a knot,
For they had ta'en a sandy plot
And scooped another Petra there.

And deeper down, hemmed in and hid
From upper light and life amid
The swallows gossiping, I thrid

Its mazes, till the dipping land
Sank to the level of my lane :
That was the last hill of the chain,
And fair below I saw the plain
That seemed cold cheer to reprimand.

Half-drowned in sleepy peace it lay,
As satiate with the boundless play
Of sunshine on its green array.

And clear-cut hills of gloomy blue
To keep it safe rose up behind,
As with a charmed ring to bind
The grassy sea, where clouds might find
A place to bring their shadows to.

I said, and blest that pastoral grace,
' How sweet thou art, thou sunny place !
Thy God approves thy smiling face : '

But straight my heart put in her word :
She said, ' Albeit thy face I bless,
There have been times, sweet wilderness,
When I have wished to love thee less,
Such pangs thy smile administered.'

But, lo ! I reached a field of wheat,
And by its gate full clear and sweet
A workman sang, while at his feet

Played a young child, all life and stir—
A three years' child, with rosy lip,
Who in the song had partnership,
Made happy with each falling chip
Dropped by the busy carpenter.

This, reared a new gate for the old,
And loud the tuneful measure rolled,
But stopped as I came up to hold
Some kindly talk of passing things.
Brave were his eyes, and frank his mien ;
Of all men's faces, calm or keen,
A better I have never seen
In all my lonely wanderings.

And how it was I scarce can tell,
We seemed to please each other well ;
I lingered till a noonday bell
Had sounded, and his task was done.
An oak had screened us from the heat ;
And 'neath it in the standing wheat,
A cradle and a fair retreat,
Full sweetly slept the little one.

The workman rested from his stroke,
And manly were the words he spoke,
Until the smiling babe awoke
And prayed to him for milk and food.
Then to a runlet forth he went,
And brought a wallet from the bent,
And bade me to the meal, intent
I should not quit his neighbourhood.

' For here,' said he, ' are bread and beer,
And meat enough to make good cheer ;
Sir, eat with me, and have no fear,
For none upon my work depend,
Saving this child ; and I may say
That I am rich, for every day
I put by somewhat ; therefore stay,
And to such eating condescend.'

We ate. The child—child fair to see—
Began to cling about his knee,
And he down leaning fatherly
Received some softly-prattled prayer ;
He smiled as if to list were balm,
And with his labour-hardened palm
Pushed from the baby-forehead calm
Those shining locks that clustered there.

The rosy mouth made fresh essay—
‘ O would he sing, or would he play ? ’
I looked, my thought would make its way—
‘ Fair is your child of face and limb,
The round blue eyes full sweetly shine.’
He answered me with glance benign—
‘ Aye, Sir ; but he is none of mine,
Although I set great store by him.’

With that, as if his heart was fain
To open—nathless not complain—
He let my quiet questions gain
His story : ‘ Not of kin to me,’
Repeating ; ‘ but asleep, awake,
For worse, for better, him I take,
To cherish for my dead wife’s sake,
And count him as her legacy.

‘ I married with the sweetest lass
That ever stepped on meadow grass ;
That ever at her looking-glass
Some pleasure took, some natural care ;
That ever swept a cottage floor
And worked all day, nor e’er gave o’er
Till eve, then watched beside the door
Till her good man should meet her there.

‘ But I lost all in its fresh prime ;
My wife fell ill before her time—
Just as the bells began to chime
One Sunday morn. By next day’s light
Her little babe was born and dead,
And she, unconscious what she said,
With feeble hands about her spread,
Sought it with yearnings infinite.

‘ With mother-longing still beguiled,
And lost in fever-fancies wild,
She piteously bemoaned her child
That we had stolen, she said, away.
And ten sad days she sighed to me,
“ I cannot rest until I see
My pretty one ! I think that he
Smiled in my face but yesterday.”

‘ Then she would change, and faintly try
To sing some tender lullaby ;
And “ Ah ! ” would moan, “ if I should die,
Who, sweetest babe, would cherish thee ? ”
Then weep, “ My pretty boy is grown ;
With tender feet on the cold stone
He stands, for he can stand alone,
And no one leads him motherly.”

‘ Then she with dying movements slow
Would seem to knit, or seem to sew :
“ His feet are bare, he must not go
Unshod : ” and as her death drew on,
“ O little baby,” she would sigh ;
“ My little child, I cannot die
Till I have you to slumber nigh—
You, you to set mine eyes upon.”

‘ When she spake thus, and moaning lay,
They said, “ She cannot pass away,
So sore she longs : ” and as the day
Broke on the hills, I left her side.
Mourning along this lane I went ;
Some travelling folk had pitched their tent
Up yonder : there a woman, bent
With age, sat meanly canopied.

‘ A twelvemonths’ child was at her side :
“ Whose infant may that be ? ” I cried.
“ His that will own him,” she replied ;
“ His mother’s dead, no worse could be.”
“ Since you can give—or else I erred—
See, you are taken at your word,”
Quoth I ; “ That child is mine ; I heard,
And own him ! Rise, and give him me.”

‘ She rose amazed, but cursed me too ;
She could not hold such luck for true,
But gave him soon, with small-ado.
I laid him by my Lucy’s side :
Close to her face that baby crept,
And stroked it, and the sweet soul wept ;
Then, while upon her arm he slept,
She passed, for she was satisfied.

' I loved her well, I wept her sore,
And when her funeral left my door
I thought that I should nevermore
 Feel any pleasure near me glow ;
But I have learned, though this I had,
'Tis sometimes natural to be glad,
And no man can be always sad
 Unless he wills to have it so.

' Oh, I had heavy nights at first,
And daily wakening was the worst :
For then my grief arose, and burst
 Like something fresh upon my head ;
Yet when less keen it seemed to grow,
I was not pleased—I wished to go
Mourning adown this vale of woe,
 For all my life uncomforted.

' I grudged myself the lightsome air,
That makes man cheerful unaware ;
When comfort came, I did not care
 To take it in, to feel it stir :
And yet God took with me His plan,
And now for my appointed span
I think I am a happier man
 For having wed and wept for her.

' Because no natural tie remains,
On this small thing I spend my gains ;
God makes me love him for my pains,
 And binds me so to wholesome care :
I would not lose from my past life
That happy year, that happy wife !
Yet now I wage no useless strife
 With feelings blithe and debonair.

' I have the courage to be gay,
Although she lieth lapped away
Under the daisies, for I say,
 " Thou wouldst be glad if thou couldst see : "
My constant thought makes manifest
I have not what I love the best,
But I must thank God for the rest
 While I hold heaven a verity.'

He rose, upon his shoulder set
The child, and while with vague regret
We parted, pleased that we had met,
 My heart did with herself confer ;
With wholesome shame she did repent
Her reasonings idly eloquent,
And said, ' I might be more content :
 But God go with the carpenter.'

THE STAR'S MONUMENT

IN THE CONCLUDING PART OF A DISCOURSE ON FAME

[*He thinks.*]

If there be memory in the world to come,
 If thought recur to SOME THINGS silenced here,
Then shall the deep heart be no longer dumb,
 But find expression in that happier sphere ;
It shall not be denied their utmost sum
 Of love, to speak without or fault or fear,
But utter to the harp with changes sweet
Words that, forbidden still, then heaven were incom-
plete.

[*He speaks.*]

Now let us talk about the ancient days,
 And things which happened long before our birth :
It is a pity to lament that praise
 Should be no shadow in the train of worth.
What is it, Madam, that your heart dismays ?
 Why murmur at the course of this vast earth ?
Think rather of the work than of the praise ;
Come, we will talk about the ancient days.

There was a Poet, Madam, once (said he) ;
 I will relate his story to you now,
While through the branches of this apple-tree
 Some spots of sunshine flicker on your brow ;
While every flower hath on its breast a bee,
 And every bird in stirring doth endow
The grass with falling blooms that smoothly glide,
As ships drop down a river with the tide.

For telling of his tale no fitter place
 Than this old orchard, sloping to the west ;
 Through its pink dome of blossom I can trace
 Some overlying azure ; for the rest,
 These flowery branches round us interlace ;
 The ground is hollowed like a mossy nest :
 Who talks of fame while the religious spring
 Offers the incense of her blossoming ?

There was a Poet, Madam, once (said he),
 Who, while he walked at sundown in a lane,
 Took to his heart the hope that destiny
 Had singled him this guerdon to obtain,
 That by the power of his sweet minstrelsy
 Some hearts for truth and goodness he should gain,
 And charm some grovellers to uplift their eyes
 And suddenly wax conscious of the skies.

‘ Master, good e’en to ye ! ’ a woodman said,
 Who the low hedge was trimming with his shears.
 ‘ This hour is fine ’—the Poet bowed his head.
 ‘ More fine,’ he thought, ‘ O friend ! to me appears
 The sunset than to you ; finer the spread
 Of orange lustre through these azure spheres,
 Where little clouds lie still, like flocks of sheep,
 Or vessels sailing in God’s other deep.

‘ O finer far ! What work so high as mine,
 Interpreter betwixt the world and man,
 Nature’s ungathered pearls to set and shrine,
 The mystery she wraps her in to scan ;
 Her unsyllabic voices to combine,
 And serve her with such love as poets can ;
 With mortal words, her chant of praise to bind,
 Then die, and leave the poem to mankind ?

O fair, O fine, O lot to be desired !
 Early and late my heart appeals to me,
 And says, “ O work, O will—Thou man, be fired
 To earn this lot,”—she says, “ I would not be
 A worker for mine OWN bread, or one hired
 For mine OWN profit. O, I would be free
 To work for others ; love so earned of them
 Should be my wages and my diadem.

“ Then when I died I should not fall,” says she,
“ Like dropping flowers that no man noticeth,
But like a great branch of some stately tree
Rent in a tempest, and flung down to death,
Thick with green leafage—so that piteously
Each passer by that ruin shuddereth,
And saith, The gap this branch hath left is wide ;
The loss thereof can never be supplied.” ’

But, Madam, while the Poet pondered so,
Toward the leafy hedge he turned his eye,
And saw two slender branches that did grow,
And from it rising spring and flourish high :
Their tops were twined together fast, and, lo,
Their shadow crossed the path as he went by—
The shadow of a wild rose and a briar,
And it was shaped in semblance like a lyre.

In sooth, a lyre ! and as the soft air played,
Those branches stirred, but did not disunite.
‘ O emblem meet for me ! ’ the Poet said ;
‘ Aye, I accept and own thee for my right ;
The shadowy lyre across my feet is laid,
Distinct though frail, and clear with crimson light :
Fast is it twined to bear the windy strain,
And, supple, it will bend and rise again.

‘ This lyre is cast across the dusty way,
The common path that common men pursue ;
I crave like blessing for my shadowy lay,
Life’s trodden paths with beauty to renew,
And cheer the eve of many a toil-stained day.
Light it, old sun, wet it, thou common dew,
That ’neath men’s feet its image still may be
While yet it waves above them, living lyre, like thee ! ’

But even as the Poet spoke, behold
He lifted up his face toward the sky ;
The ruddy sun dipped under the grey wold,
His shadowy lyre was gone ; and, passing by,
The woodman lifting up his shears, was bold
Their temper on those branches twain to try,
And all their loveliness and leafage sweet
Fell in the pathway, at the Poet’s feet.

' Ah ! my fair emblem that I chose,' quoth he,
' That for myself I coveted but now,
Too soon, methinks, thou hast been false to me ;
The lyre from pathway fades, the light from brow.'
Then straightway turned he from it hastily,
As dream that waking sense will disallow ;
And while the highway heavenward paled apace,
He went on westward to his dwelling-place.

He went on steadily, while far and fast
The summer darkness dropped upon the world,
A gentle air among the cloudlets passed
And fanned away their crimson ; then it curled
The yellow poppies in the field, and cast
A dimness on the grasses, for it furled
Their daisies, and swept out the purple stain
That eve had left upon the pastoral plain.

He reached his city. Lo ! the darkened street
Where he abode was full of gazing crowds ;
He heard the muffled tread of many feet ;
A multitude stood gazing at the clouds.
' What mark ye there,' said he, ' and wherefore meet ?
Only a passing mist the heaven o'ershrouds ;
It breaks, it parts, it drifts like scattered spars—
What lies behind it but the nightly stars ?'

Then did the gazing crowd to him aver
They sought a lamp in heaven whose light was hid ;
For that in sooth an old Astronomer
Down from his roof had rushed into their mid,
Frighted, and fain with others to confer,
That he had cried, ' O sirs ! '—and upward bid
Them gaze—' O sirs, a light is quenched afar ;
Look up, my masters, we have lost a star !'

The people pointed, and the Poet's eyes
Flew upward, where a gleaming sisterhood
Swam in the dewy heaven. The very skies
Were mutable ; for all-amazed he stood
To see that truly not in any wise
He could behold them as of old, nor could
His eyes receive the whole whereof he wot,
But when he told them over, one WAS NOT.

While yet he gazed and pondered reverently,

The fickle folk began to move away.

‘It is but one star less for us to see,

And what does one star signify?’ quoth they;

‘The heavens are full of them.’ ‘But, ah!’ said he,

‘That star was bright while yet she lasted.’ ‘Aye!’

They answered: ‘praise her, Poet, an’ ye will:

Some are now shining that are brighter still.’

‘Poor star! to be disparagèd so soon

On her withdrawal,’ thus the Poet sighed;

‘That men should miss, and straight deny her noon

Its brightness!’ But the people in their pride

Said, ‘How are we beholden?’ ’twas no boon

She gave. Her nature ’twas to shine so wide:

She could not choose but shine, nor could we know

Such star had ever dwelt in heaven but so.’

The Poet answered sadly, ‘That is true!’

And then he thought upon unthankfulness,

While some went homeward; and the residue,

Reflecting that the stars are numberless,

Mourned that man’s daylight hours should be so few,

So short the shining that his path may bless:

To nearer themes then tuned their willing lips,

And thought no more upon the star’s eclipse.

But he, the Poet, could not rest content

Till he had found that old Astronomer;

Therefore at midnight to his house he went

And prayed him be his tale’s interpreter.

And yet upon the heaven his eyes he bent,

Hearing the marvel; yet he sought for her

That was awanting, in the hope her face

Once more might fill its reft abiding-place.

Then said the old Astronomer: ‘My son,

I sat alone upon my roof to-night;

I saw the stars come forth, and scarcely shun

To fringe the edges of the western light;

I marked those ancient clusters one by one,

The same that blessed our old forefather’s sight;

For God alone is older—none but He

Can charge the stars with mutability;

' The elders of the night, the steadfast stars,
The old, old stars which God has let us see,
That they might be our soul's auxiliars,
And help us to the truth how young we be—
God's youngest, latest born, as if, some spars
And a little clay being over of them—He
Had made our world and us thereof, yet given,
To humble us, the sight of His great heaven.

' But ah ! my son, to-night mine eyes have seen
The death of light, the end of old renown ;
A shrinking back of glory that had been,
A dread eclipse before the Eternal's frown.
How soon a little grass will grow between
These eyes and those appointed to look down
Upon a world that was not made on high
Till the last scenes of their long empire !

' To-night that shining cluster now despoiled
Lay in day's wake a perfect sisterhood ;
Sweet was its light to me that long had toiled,
It gleamed and trembled o'er the distant wood ;
Blown in a pile the clouds from it recoiled,
Cool twilight up the sky her way made good ;
I saw, but not believed—it was so strange—
That one of those same stars had suffered change.

' The darkness gathered, and methought she spread,
Wrapped in a reddish haze that waxed and waned ;
But notwithstanding to myself I said—
" The stars are changeless ; sure some mote hath
stained

Mine eyes, and her fair glory minishèd."
Of age and failing vision I complained,
And thought " some vapour in the heavens doth swim,
That makes her look so large and yet so dim."

' But I gazed round, and all her lustrous peers
In her red presence showed but wan and white ;
For like a living coal beheld through tears
She glowed and quivered with a gloomy light :
Methought she trembled, as all sick through fears,
Helpless, appalled, appealing to the night ;
Like one who throws his arms up to the sky
And bows down suffering, hopeless of reply.

At length, as if an everlasting Hand
Had taken hold upon her in her place,
And swiftly, like a golden grain of sand,
Through all the deep infinitudes of space
Was drawing her—God's truth as here I stand—
Backward and inward to itself ; her face
Fast lessened, lessened, till it looked no more
Than smallest atom on a boundless shore.

' And she that was so fair, I saw her lie,
The smallest thing in God's great firmament,
Till night was at the darkest, and on high
Her sisters glittered, though her light was spent ;
I strained, to follow her, each aching eye,
So swiftly at her Maker's will she went ;
I looked again—I looked—the star was gone,
And nothing marked in heaven where she had shone.'

' Gone ! ' said the Poet, ' and about to be
Forgotten : O, how sad a fate is hers ! '
' How is it sad, my son ? ' all reverently
The old man answered ; ' though she ministers
No longer with her lamp to me and thee,
She has fulfilled her mission. God transfers
Or dims her ray ; yet was she blest as bright,
For all her life was spent in giving light.'

' Her mission she fulfilled assuredly,'
The Poet cried : ' but, O unhappy star !
None praise and few will bear in memory
The name she went by. O, from far, from far
Comes down, methinks, her mournful voice to me,
Full of regrets that men so thankless are.'
So said, he told that old Astronomer
All that the gazing crowd had said of her.

And he went on to speak in bitter wise,
As one who seems to tell another's fate,
But feels that nearer meaning underlies,
And points its sadness to his own estate :
' If such be the reward,' he said with sighs,
' Envy to earn for love, for goodness hate—
If such be thy reward, hard case is thine !
It had been better for thee not to shine.

' If to reflect a light that is divine
Makes that which doth reflect it better seen,
And if to see is to condemn the shrine,
'Twere surely better it had never been :
It had been better for her NOT TO SHINE,
And for me NOT TO SING. Better, I ween,
For us to yield no more that radiance bright,
For them, to lack the light than scorn the light.'

Strange words were those from poet lips (said he) ;
And then he paused, and sighed, and turned to look
Upon the lady's downcast eyes, and see
How fast the honey bees in settling shook
Those apple blossoms on her from the tree ;
He watched her busy fingers as they took
And slipped the knotted thread, and thought how much
He would have given that hand to hold—to touch.

At length, as suddenly become aware
Of this long pause, she lifted up her face,
And he withdrew his eyes—she looked so fair
And cold, he thought, in her unconscious grace.
' Ah ! little dreams she of the restless care ',
He thought, ' that makes my heart to throb apace :
Though we this morning part, the knowledge sends
No thrill to her calm pulse—we are but FRIENDS.'

Ah ! turret clock (he thought), I would thy hand
Were hid behind yon towering maple-trees !
Ah ! tell-tale shadow, but one moment stand—
Dark shadow—fast advancing to my knees ;
Ah ! foolish heart (he thought), that vainly planned
By feigning gladness to arrive at ease ;
Ah ! painful hour, yet pain to think it ends ;
I must remember that we are but friends.

And while the knotted thread moved to and fro,
In sweet regretful tones that lady said :
' It seemeth that the fame you would forgo
The Poet whom you tell of coveted ;
But I would fain, methinks, his story know.
And was he loved ? ' said she, ' or was he wed ?
And had he friends ? ' ' One friend, perhaps,' said he,
' But for the rest, I pray you let it be.'

Ah ! little bird (he thought), most patient bird,
Breasting thy speckled eggs the long day through,
By so much as my reason is preferred

Above thine instinct, I my work would do
Better than thou dost thine. Thou hast not stirred
This hour thy wing. Ah ! russet bird, I sue
For a like patience to wear through these hours—
Bird on thy nest among the apple-flowers.

I will not speak—I will not speak to thee,
My star ! and soon to be my lost, lost star.
The sweetest, first, that ever shone on me,
So high above me and beyond so far ;

I can forgo thee, but not bear to see
My love, like rising mist, thy lustre mar :
That were a base return for thy sweet light.
Shine, though I never more shall see that thou art bright.

Never ! 'Tis certain that no hope is—none
No hope for me, and yet for thee no fear.

The hardest part of my hard task is done ;
Thy calm assures me that I am not dear ;
Though far and fast the rapid moments run,
Thy bosom heaveth not, thine eyes are clear ;
Silent, perhaps a little sad at heart
She is. I am her friend, and I depart.

Silent she had been, but she raised her face ;
' And will you end,' said she, ' this half-told tale ? '

' Yes, it were best,' he answered her. ' The place

Where I left off was where he felt to fail
His courage, Madam, through the fancy base

That they who love, endure, or work, may rail
And cease—if all their love, the works they wrought,
And their endurance, men have set at nought.'

' It had been better for me NOT to sing.'

My Poet said, ' and for her NOT to shine ;
But him the old man answered, sorrowing,

' My son, did God who made her, the Divine
Lighter of suns, when down to yon bright ring

He cast her, like some gleaming almandine,
And set her in her place, begirt with rays,
Say unto her " Give light ", or say " Earn praise " ?

The Poet said, 'He made her to give light.'

'My son,' the old man answered, 'blest are such ;
A blessed lot is theirs ; but if each night

Mankind had praised her radiance—inasmuch
As praise had never made it wax more bright,

And cannot now rekindle with its touch
Her lost effulgence, it is nought. I wot
That praise was not her blessing nor her lot.'

'Aye,' said the Poet, 'I my words abjure,

And I repent me that I uttered them ;
But by her light and by its forfeiture

She shall not pass without her requiem.
Though my name perish, yet shall hers endure ;

Though I should be forgotten, she, lost gem,
Shall be remembered ; though she sought not fame,
It shall be busy with her beauteous name.

'For I will raise in her bright memory,

Lost now on earth, a lasting monument,
And graven on it shall recorded be

That all her rays to light mankind were spent ;
And I will sing albeit none heedeth me,

On her exemplar being still intent :
While in men's sight shall stand the record thus—
"So long as she did last she lighted us."'

So said, he raised, according to his vow,

On the green grass, where oft his townsfolk met,
Under the shadow of a leafy bough

That leaned toward a singing rivulet,
One pure white stone, whereon, like crown on brow,

The image of the vanished star was set ;
And this was graven on the pure white stone
In golden letters—'WHILE SHE LIVED SHE SHONE.'

Madam, I cannot give this story well—

My heart is beating to another chime ;
My voice must needs a different cadence swell ;

It is yon singing bird, which all the time
Wooeth his nested mate, that doth dispel

My thoughts. What, deem you, could a lover's rhyme
The sweetness of that passionate lay excel ?

O soft, O low her voice—'I cannot tell.'

[*He thinks.*]

The old man—aye, he spoke, he was not hard ;
 ‘ She was his joy,’ he said, ‘ his comforter,
 But he would trust me. I was not debarred
 Whate’er my heart approved to say to her.’
 Approved ! O torn and tempted and ill-starred
 And breaking heart, approve not nor demur ;
 It is the serpent that beguileth thee
 With ‘ God doth know ’ beneath this apple-tree.

Yea, God DOOTH know, and only God doth know.

Have pity, God, my spirit groans to Thee !
 I bear Thy curse primeval, and I go ;
 But heavier than on Adam falls on me
 My tillage of the wilderness ; for lo,
 I leave behind the woman, and I see
 As ’twere the gates of Eden closing o’er
 To hide her from my sight for evermore.

[*He speaks.*]

I am a fool, with sudden start he cried,
 To let the song-bird work me such unrest :
 If I break off again, I pray you chide,
 For morning fleeteth, with my tale at best
 Half told. That white stone, Madam, gleamed beside
 The little rivulet, and all men pressed
 To read the lost one’s story traced thereon,
 The golden legend—‘ While she lived she shone.’

And, Madam, when the Poet heard them read,
 And children spell the letters softly through,
 It may be that he felt at heart some need,
 Some craving to be thus remembered too ;
 It may be that he wondered if indeed
 He must die wholly when he passed from view ;
 It may be, wished when death his eyes made dim,
 That some kind hand would raise such stone for him.

But shortly, as there comes to most of us,
 There came to him the need to quit his home :
 To tell you why were simply hazardous.
 What said I, Madam ?—men were made to roam,

My meaning is. It hath been always thus :

They are athirst for mountains and sea foam ;
Heirs of this world, what wonder if perchance
They long to see their grand inheritance ?

He left his city, and went forth to teach

Mankind, his peers, the hidden harmony
That underlies God's discords, and to reach

And touch the master-string that like a sigh
Thrills in their souls, as if it would beseech

Some hand to sound it, and to satisfy
Its yearning for expression : but no word
Till poet touch it hath to make its music heard.

[*He thinks.*]

I know that God is good, though evil dwells

Among us, and doth all things holiest share ;
That there is joy in heaven, while yet our knells

Sound for the souls which He has summoned there :
That painful love unsatisfied hath spells

Earned by its smart to soothe its fellow's care :
But yet this atom cannot in the whole
Forget itself—it aches a separate soul.

[*He speaks.*]

But, Madam, to my Poet I return.

With his sweet cadences of woven words,
He made their rude untutored hearts to burn
And melt like gold refined. No brooding birds
Sing better of the love that doth sojourn

Hid in the nest of home, which softly girds
The beating heart of life ; and, strait though it be,
Is straitness better than wide liberty.

He taught them, and they learned, but not the less

Remained unconscious whence that lore they drew,
But dreamed that of their native nobleness

Some lofty thoughts that he had planted, grew ;
His glorious maxims in a lowly dress

Like seed sown broadcast sprung in all men's view,
The sower, passing onward, was not known,
And all men reaped the harvest as their own.

It may be, Madam, that those ballads sweet,
Whose rhythmic measures yesterday we sung,
Which time and changes make not obsolete,
But (as a river bears down blossoms flung
Upon its breast) take with them while they fleet—
It may be from his lyre that first they sprung :
But who can tell, since work surviveth fame ?—
The rhyme is left, but lost the Poet's name.

He worked, and bravely he fulfilled his trust—
So long he wandered sowing worthy seed,
Watering of wayside buds that were adust,
And touching for the common ear his reed—
So long to wear away the cankering rust
That dulls the gold of life—so long to plead
With sweetest music for all souls oppressed,
That he was old ere he had thought of rest.

Old and grey-headed, leaning on a staff,
To that great city of his birth he came,
And at its gates he paused with wondering laugh
To think how changed were all his thoughts of fame
Since first he carved the golden epitaph
To keep in memory a worthy name,
And thought forgetfulness had been its doom
But for a few bright letters on a tomb.

The old Astronomer had long since died ;
The friends of youth were gone and far dispersed ;
Strange were the domes that rose on every side ;
Strange fountains on his wondering vision burst ;
The men of yesterday their business plied ;
No face was left that he had known at first ;
And in the city gardens, lo, he sees
The saplings that he set are stately trees.

Upon the grass beneath their welcome shade,
Behold ! he marks the fair white monument,
And on its face the golden words displayed,
For sixty years their lustre have not spent ;
He sitteth by it and is not afraid,
But in its shadow he is well content ;
And envies not, though bright their gleamings are,
The golden letters of the vanished star.

He gazeth up ; exceeding bright appears

That golden legend to his aged eyes,

For they are dazzled till they fill with tears,

And his lost Youth doth like a vision rise ;

She saith to him, ' In all these toilsome years,

What hast thou won by work or enterprise ?

What hast thou won to make amends to thee,

As thou didst swear to do, for loss of me ?

' O man ! O white-haired man ! ' the vision said,

' Since we two sat beside this monument

Life's clearest hues are all evanishèd,

The golden wealth thou hadst of me is spent ;

The wind hath swept thy flowers, their leaves are shed ;

The music is played out that with thee went.'

' Peace, peace ! ' he cried ; ' I lost thee, but, in truth,

There are worse losses than the loss of youth.'

He said not what those losses were—but I—

But I must leave them, for the time draws near.

Some lose not ONLY joy, but memory

Of how it felt : not love that was so dear

Lose only, but the steadfast certainty

That once they had it ; doubt comes on, then fear

And after that despondency. I wis

The Poet must have meant such loss as this.

But while he sat and pondered on his youth,

He said, ' It did one deed that doth remain,

For it preserved the memory and the truth

Of her that now doth neither set nor wane,

But shine in all men's thoughts ; nor sink forsooth,

And be forgotten like the summer rain.

O, it is good that man should not forget

Or benefits forgone or brightness set ! '

He spoke and said, ' My lot contenteth me ;

I am right glad for this her worthy fame ;

That which was good and great I fain would see

Drawn with a halo round what rests—its name.'

This while the Poet said, behold there came

A workman with his tools anear the tree,

And when he read the words he paused awhile

And pondered on them with a wondering smile.

And then he said, ' I pray you, Sir, what mean
The golden letters of this monument ? '
In wonder quoth the Poet, ' Hast thou been
A dweller near at hand, and their intent
Hast neither heard by voice of fame, nor seen
The marble earlier ? ' ' Aye,' said he, and leant
Upon his spade to hear the tale, then sigh,
And say it was a marvel, and pass by.

Then said the Poet, ' This is strange to me.'
But as he mused, with trouble in his mind,
A band of maids approached him leisurely,
Like vessels sailing with a favouring wind ;
And of their rosy lips requested he,
As one that for a doubt would solving find,
The tale, if tale there were, of that white stone,
And those fair letters—' While she lived she shone.'

Then like a fleet that floats becalmed they stay.
' O, Sir,' saith one, ' this monument is old ;
But we have heard our virtuous mothers say
That by their mothers thus the tale was told :
A Poet made it ; journeying then away,
He left us ; and though some the meaning hold
For other than the ancient one, yet we
Receive this legend for a certainty :—

' There was a lily once, most purely white,
Beneath the shadow of these boughs it grew ;
Its starry blossom it unclosed by night,
And a young Poet loved its shape and hue.
He watched it nightly, 'twas so fair a sight,
Until a stormy wind arose and blew,
And when he came once more his flower to greet,
Its fallen petals drifted to his feet.

' And for his beautiful white lily's sake,
That she might be remembered where her scent
Had been right sweet, he said that he would make
In her dear memory a monument :
For she was purer than a driven flake
Of snow, and in her grace most excellent ;
The loveliest life that death did ever mar,
As beautiful to gaze on as a star.'

'I thank you, maid,' the Poet answered her,
'And I am glad that I have heard your tale.'

With that they passed ; and as an inlander,
Having heard breakers raging in a gale,
And falling down in thunder, will aver

That still, when far away in grassy vale,
He seems to hear those seething waters bound,
So in his ears the maiden's voice did sound.

He leaned his face upon his hand, and thought
And thought, until a youth came by that way ;
And once again of him the Poet sought

The story of the star. But, well-a-day !
He said, 'The meaning with much doubt is fraught,
The sense thereof can no man surely say ;
For still tradition sways the common ear,
That of a truth a star DID DISAPPEAR.

'But they who look beneath the outer shell
That wraps the "kernel of the people's lore",

Hold THAT for superstition ; and they tell
That seven lovely sisters dwelt of yore
In this old city, where it so befell

That one a Poet loved ; that, furthermore,
As stars above us she was pure and good,
And fairest of that beauteous sisterhood.

'So beautiful they were, those virgins seven,
That all men called them clustered stars in song,
Forgetful that the stars abide in heaven :

But woman bideth not beneath it long ;
For O, alas ! alas ! one fated even,

When stars their azure deeps began to throng,
That virgin's eyes of Poet loved waxed dim,
And all their lustrous shining waned to him.

'In summer dusk she drooped her head and sighed
Until what time the evening star went down,
And all the other stars did shining bide

Clear in the lustre of their old renown,
And then—the virgin laid her down and died :

Forgot her youth, forgot her beauty's crown,
Forgot the sisters whom she loved before,
And broke her Poet's heart for evermore.'

' A mournful tale, in sooth,' the lady saith :

' But did he truly grieve for evermore ? '

' It may be you forget,' he answereth,

' That this is but a fable at the core

O' the other fable.' ' Though it be but breath,'

She asketh, ' was it true ? ' Then he, ' This lore,
Since it is fable, either way may go ;

Then, if it please you, think it might be so.'

' Nay, but,' she saith, ' if I had told your tale,

The virgin should have lived his home to bless,

Or, must she die, I would have made to fail

His useless love.' I tell you not the less,

(He sighs) because it was of no avail :

His heart the Poet would not dispossess

Thereof. But let us leave the fable now.

My Poet heard it with an aching brow.

And he made answer thus : ' I thank thee, youth ;

Strange is thy story to these aged ears,

But I bethink me thou hast told a truth

Under the guise of fable. If my tears,

Thou lost belovèd star, lost now, forsooth,

Indeed could bring thee back among thy peers,

So new thou shouldst be deemed as newly seen,

For men forget that thou hast ever been.

' There was a morning when I longed for fame,

There was a noontide when I passed it by,

There is an evening when I think not shame

Its substance and its being to deny ;

For if men bear in mind great deeds, the name

Of him that wrought them shall they leave to die ;

Or if his name they shall have deathless writ,

They change the deeds that first ennobled it.

' O golden letters of this monument !

O words to celebrate a loved renown

Lost now or wrested ! and to fancies lent,

Or on a fabled forehead set for crown,

For my departed star, I am content,

Though legends dim and years her memory drown :

For what were fame to her, compared and set

By this great truth which ye make lustrous yet ? '

‘ Adieu ! ’ the Poet said, ‘ my vanished star,
Thy duty and thy happiness were one.
Work is heaven’s hest ; its fame is sublunar :
The fame thou dost not need—the work is done.
For thee I am content that these things are ;
More than content were I, my race being run,
Might it be true of me, though none thereon
Should muse regretful—“ While he lived he shone.” ’

So said, the Poet rose and went his way,
And that same lot he proved whereof he spake.
Madam, my story is told out ; the day
Draws out her shadows, time doth overtake
The morning. That which endeth call a lay,
Sung after pause—a motto in the break
Between two chapters of a tale not new,
Nor joyful—but a common tale. Adieu !

And that same God who made your face so fair,
And gave your woman’s heart its tenderness,
So shield the blessing He implanted there,
That it may never turn to your distress,
And never cost you trouble or despair,
Nor granted leave the granter comfortless ;
But like a river blest where’er it flows,
Be still receiving while it still bestows.

Adieu, he said, and paused, while she sat mute
In the soft shadow of the apple-tree ;
The skylark’s song rang like a joyous flute,
The brook went prattling past her restlessly :
She let their tongues be her tongue’s substitute ;
It was the wind that sighed, it was not she :
And what the lark, the brook, the wind, had said,
We cannot tell, for none interpreted.

Their counsels might be hard to reconcile,
They might not suit the moment or the spot.
She rose, and laid her work aside the while
Down in the sunshine of that grassy plot ;
She looked upon him with an almost smile,
And held to him a hand that faltered not.
One moment—bird and brook went warbling on,
And the wind sighed again—and he was gone.

So quietly, as if she heard no more
Or skylark in the azure overhead,
Or water slipping past the cressy shore,
Or wind that rose in sighs, and sighing fled—
So quietly, until the alders hoar
Took him beneath them ; till the downward spread
Of planes engulfed him in their leafy seas—
She stood beneath her rose-flushed apple-trees.

And then she stooped toward the mossy grass,
And gathered up her work and went her way ;
Straight to that ancient turret she did pass,
And startle back some fawns that were at play.
She did not sigh, she never said ' Alas ! '
Although he was her friend : but still that day,
Where elm and hornbeam spread a towering dome,
She crossed the dells to her ancestral home.

And did she love him ?—what if she did not ?
Then home was still the home of happiest years ;
Nor thought was exiled to partake his lot,
Nor heart lost courage through foreboding fears ;
Nor echo did against her secret plot,
Nor music her betray to painful tears ;
Nor life become a dream, and sunshine dim
And riches poverty, because of him.

But did she love him ?—what and if she did ?
Love cannot cool the burning Austral sand,
Nor show the secret waters that lie hid
In arid valleys of that desert land.
Love has no spells can scorching winds forbid,
Or bring the help which tarries near to hand,
Or spread a cloud for curtaining faded eyes
That gaze up dying into alien skies.

A DEAD YEAR

I TOOK a year out of my life and story—
 A dead year, and said, 'I will hew thee a tomb!
 "All the kings of the nations lie in glory;"
 Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom;
 Swathed in linen, and precious unguents old;
 Painted with cinnabar, and rich with gold.

'Silent they rest, in solemn salvatory,
 Sealed from the moth and the owl and the flittermouse—
 Each with his name on his brow.
 "All the kings of the nations lie in glory," 10
 Every one in his own house:"
 Then why not thou?

'Year,' I said, 'thou shalt not lack
 Bribes to bar thy coming back;
 Doth old Egypt wear her best
 In the chambers of her rest?
 Doth she take to her last bed
 Beaten gold, and glorious red?
 Envy not! for thou wilt wear
 In the dark a shroud as fair; 20
 Golden with the sunny ray
 Thou withdrawest from my day;
 Wrought upon with colours fine
 Stolen from this life of mine:
 Like the dusty Libyan kings,
 Lie with two wide-open wings
 On thy breast, as if to say,
 On these wings hope flew away;
 And so housed, and thus adorned,
 Not forgotten, but not scorned, 30
 Let the dark for evermore
 Close thee when I close the door;
 And the dust for ages fall
 In the creases of thy pall;
 And no voice nor visit rude
 Break thy sealèd solitude.'

I took the year out of my life and story,
The dead year, and said, 'I have hewed thee a tomb !

"All the kings of the nations lie in glory,"
Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom ; 40
But for the sword, and the sceptre, and diadem,
Sure thou didst reign like them.'
So I laid her with those tyrants old and hoary,
According to my vow ;
For I said, 'The kings of the nations lie in glory,
And so shalt thou !'

'Rock,' I said, 'thy ribs are strong,
That I bring thee guard it long ;
Hide the light from buried eyes—
Hide it, lest the dead arise.' 50
'Year,' I said, and turned away,
'I am free of thee this day ;
All that we two only know
I forgive and I forgo,
So thy face no more I meet
In the field or in the street.

Thus we parted, she and I ;
Life hid death, and put it by ;
Life hid death, and said, 'Be free !
I have no more need of thee.' 60
No more need ! O mad mistake,
With repentance in its wake !
Ignorant, and rash, and blind,
Life had left the grave behind ;
But had locked within its hold
With the spices and the gold,
All she had to keep her warm
In the raging of the storm.

Scarce the sunset bloom was gone,
And the little stars outshone, 70
Ere the dead year, stiff and stark,
Drew me to her in the dark ;
Death drew life to come to her,
Beating at her sepulchre,
Crying out, 'How can I part
With the best share of my heart ?

Lo, it lies upon the bier,
 Captive, with the buried year.
 O my heart ! ' And I fell prone,
 Weeping at the sealèd stone ; 80
 ' Year among the shades,' I said,
 ' Since I live, and thou art dead,
 Let my captive heart be free
 Like a bird to fly to me.'
 And I stayed some voice to win,
 But none answered from within ;
 And I kissed the door—and night
 Deepened till the stars waxed bright ;
 And I saw them set and wane.
 And the world turned green again. 90

' So,' I whispered, ' open door,
 I must tread this palace floor—
 Sealèd palace, rich and dim.
 Let a narrow sunbeam swim
 After me, and on me spread
 While I look upon my dead ;
 Let a little warmth be free
 To come after ; let me see
 Through the doorway, when I sit
 Looking out, the swallows flit, 100
 Settling not till daylight goes ;
 Let me smell the wild white rose,
 Smell the woodbine and the may ;
 Mark, upon a sunny day,
 Sated from their blossoms rise
 Honey-bees and butterflies.
 Let me hear, O ! let me hear,
 Sitting by my buried year,
 Finches chirping to their young,
 And the little noises flung 110
 Out of clefts where rabbits play,
 Or from falling water-spray ;
 And the gracious echoes woke
 By man's work : the woodman's stroke,
 Shout of shepherd, whistlings blithe,
 And the whetting of the scythe ;

Let this be, lest, shut and furled
 From the well-belovèd world,
 I forget her yearnings old,
 And her troubles manifold, 120
 Strivings sore, submissions meet,
 And my pulse no longer beat,
 Keeping time and bearing part
 With the pulse of her great heart.

‘So ! swing open door, and shade
 Take me ; I am not afraid,
 For the time will not be long ;
 Soon I shall have waxen strong—
 Strong enough my own to win
 From the grave it lies within.’ 130

And I entered. On her bier
 Quiet lay the buried year ;
 I sat down where I could see
 Life without and sunshine free,
 Death within. And I between,
 Waited my own heart to wean
 From the shroud that shaded her
 In the rock-hewn sepulchre—
 Waited till the dead should say,
 ‘Heart, be free of me this day’— 140
 Waited with a patient will—
 AND I WAIT BETWEEN THEM STILL.

I take the year back to my life and story,
 The dead year, and say, ‘I will share in thy tomb.
 “All the kings of the nations lie in glory ;”
 Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom !
 They reigned in their lifetime with sceptre and diadem,
 But thou excellest them ;
 For life doth make thy grave her oratory,
 And the crown is still on thy brow ; 150
 “All the kings of the nations lie in glory,”
 And so dost thou.’

REFLECTIONS

Written for THE PORTFOLIO SOCIETY, July 1862

Looking over a Gate at a Pool in a Field

WHAT change has made the pastures sweet
And reached the daisies at my feet,

And cloud that wears a golden hem ?
This lovely world, the hills, the sward—
They all look fresh, as if our Lord
But yesterday had finished them.

And here 's the field with light aglow ;
How fresh its boundary lime-trees show,
And how its wet leaves trembling shine !
Between their trunks come through to me
The morning sparkles of the sea
Below the level browsing line.

I see the pool more clear by half
Than pools where other waters laugh
Up at the breasts of coot and rail.
There, as she passed it on her way,
I saw reflected yesterday
A maiden with a milking-pail.

There, neither slowly nor in haste,
One hand upon her slender waist,
The other lifted to her pail,
She rosy in the morning light,
Among the water-daisies white,
Like some fair sloop appeared to sail.

Against her ankles as she trod,
The lucky buttercups did nod.
I leaned upon the gate to see :
The sweet thing looked, but did not speak ;
A dimple came in either cheek,
And all my heart was gone from me.

Then, as I lingered on the gate
And she came up like coming fate,
I saw my picture in her eyes—
Clear dancing eyes, more black than sloes,
Cheeks like the mountain pink, that grows
Among white-headed majesties.

I said, 'A tale was made of old
That I would fain to thee unfold ;
Ah ! let me—let me tell the tale.'
But high she held her comely head ;
'I cannot heed it now,' she said,
'For carrying of the milking-pail.'

She laughed. What good to make ado ?
I held the gate, and she came through,
And took her homeward path anon.
From the clear pool her face had fled ;
It rested on my heart instead,
Reflected when the maid was gone.

With happy youth, and work content,
So sweet and stately on she went,
Right careless of the untold tale.
Each step she took I loved her more,
And followed to her dairy door
The maiden with the milking-pail.

II

For hearts where wakened love doth lurk,
How fine, how blest a thing is work !
For work does good when reasons fail—
Good ; yet the axe at every stroke
The echo of a name awoke—
Her name is Mary Martindale.

I'm glad that echo was not heard
Aright by other men : a bird
Knows doubtless what his own notes tell ;
And I know not, but I can say
I felt as shame-faced all that day
As if folks heard her name right well.

And when the west began to glow
 I went—I could not choose but go—
 To that same dairy on the hill ;
 And while sweet Mary moved about
 Within, I came to her without,
 And leaned upon the window-sill.

The garden border where I stood
 Was sweet with pinks and southernwood ;
 I spoke—her answer seemed to fail :
 I smelt the pinks—I could not see ;
 The dusk came down and sheltered me,
 And in the dusk she heard my tale.

And what is left that I should tell ?
 I begged a kiss, I pleaded well :
 The rosebud lips did long decline ;
 But yet I think, I think 'tis true,
 That, leaned at last into the dew,
 One little instant they were mine.

O life ! how dear thou hast become :
 She laughed at dawn, and I was dumb,
 But evening counsels best prevail.
 Fair shine the blue that o'er her spreads,
 Green be the pastures where she treads,
 The maiden with the milking-pail !

THE LETTER L

ABSENT

We sat on grassy slopes that meet
 With sudden dip the level strand ;
 The trees hung overhead—our feet
 Were on the sand.

Two silent girls, a thoughtful man,
 We sunned ourselves in open light,
 And felt such April airs as fan
 The Isle of Wight ;

And smelt the wall-flower in the crag
Whereon that dainty waft had fed,
Which made the bell-hung cowslip wag
Her delicate head ;

And let alighting jackdaws fleet
Adown it open-winged, and pass
Till they could touch with outstretched feet
The warmed grass.

The happy wave ran up and rang
Like service bells a long way off,
And down a little freshet sprang
From mossy trough,

And splashed into a rain of spray,
And fretted on with daylight's loss,
Because so many blue-bells lay
Leaning across.

Blue martins gossiped in the sun,
And pairs of chattering daws flew by,
And sailing brigs rocked softly on
In company.

Wild cherry boughs above us spread
The whitest shade was ever seen,
And flicker, flicker, came and fled
Sun spots between.

Bees murmured in the milk-white bloom
As babes will sigh for deep content
When their sweet hearts for peace make room,
As given, not lent.

And we saw on : we said no word,
And one was lost in musings rare,
One buoyant as the waft that stirred
Her shining hair.

His eyes were bent upon the sand,
Unfathomed deeps within them lay.
A slender rod was in his hand—
A hazel spray.

Her eyes were resting on his face,
As shyly glad, by stealth to glean
Impressions of his manly grace
And guarded mien ;

The mouth with steady sweetness set,
And eyes conveying unaware
The distant hint of some regret
That harboured there.

She gazed, and in the tender flush
That made her face like roses blown.
And in the radiance and the hush,
Her thought was shown.

It was a happy thing to sit
So near, nor mar his reverie ;
She looked not for a part in it,
So meek was she.

But it was solace for her eyes,
And for her heart, that yearned to him,
To watch apart in loving wise
Those musings dim.

Lost—lost, and gone ! The Pelham woods
Were full of doves that cooed at ease ;
The orchis filled her purple hoods
For dainty bees.

He heard not ; all the delicate air
Was fresh with falling water-spray :
It mattered not—he was not there,
But far away.

Till with the hazel in his hand,
Still drowned in thought, it thus befell ;
He drew a letter on the sand—
The letter L.

And looking on it, straight there wrought
A ruddy flush about his brow ;
His letter woke him : absent thought
Rushed homeward now.

And half-abashed, his hasty touch
Effaced it with a tell-tale care,
As if his action had been much,
And not his air.

And she ? she watched his open palm
Smooth out the letter from the sand,
And rose, with aspect almost calm,
And filled her hand

With cherry bloom, and moved away
To gather wild forget-me-not,
And let her errant footsteps stray
To one sweet spot,

As if she coveted the fair
White lining of the silver-weed,
And cuckoo-pint that shaded there
Empurpled seed.

She had not feared, as I divine,
Because she had not hoped. Alas !
The sorrow of it ! for that sign
Came but to pass ;

And yet it robbed her of the right
To give, who looked not to receive,
And made her blush in love's despite
That she should grieve.

A shape in white, she turned to gaze ;
Her eyes were shaded with her hand,
And half-way up the winding ways
We saw her stand.

Green hollows of the fringed cliff,
Red rocks that under waters show,
Blue reaches, and a sailing skiff,
Were spread below.

She stood to gaze, perhaps to sigh,
Perhaps to think ; but who can tell,
How heavy on her heart must lie
The letter L !

She came anon with quiet grace ;
And ' What,' she murmured, ' silent yet !'
He answered, ' 'Tis a haunted place,
And spell-beset.

' O speak to us, and break the spell !'
' The spell is broken,' she replied.
' I crossed the running brook, it fell,
It could not bide.

' And I have brought a budding world,
Of orchis spires and daisies rank,
And ferny plumes but half uncürled,
From yonder bank ;

' And I shall weave of them a crown,
And at the well-head launch it free,
That so the brook may float it down,
And out to sea.

' There may it to some English hands
From fairy meadow seem to come :
The fairest of fairy lands—
The land of home.'

' Weave on,' he said, and as she wove
We told how currents in the deep,
With branches from a lemon grove,
Blue bergs will sweep ;

And messages from shipwrecked folk
Will navigate the moon-led main,
And painted boards of splintered oak
Their port regain.

Then floated out by vagrant thought,
My soul beheld on torrid sand
The wasteful water set at nought
Man's skilful hand,

And suck out gold-dust from the box,
And wash it down in weedy whirls,
And split the wine-keg on the rocks,
And lose the pearls.

‘ Ah ! why to that which needs it not,’
Methought, ‘ should costly things be given ?
How much is wasted, wrecked, forgot,
On this side heaven ! ’

So musing, did mine ears awake
To maiden tones of sweet reserve,
And manly speech that seemed to make
The steady curve

Of lips that uttered it defer
Their guard, and soften for the thought :
She listened, and his talk with her
Was fancy-fraught.

‘ There is not much in liberty ’—
With doubtful pauses he began ;
And said to her and said to me,
‘ There was a man—

‘ There was a man who dreamed one night
That his dead father came to him ;
And said, when fire was low, and light
Was burning dim—

“ Why vagrant thus, my sometime pride,
Unloved, unloving, wilt thou roam ?
Sure home is best ! ” The son replied,
“ I have no home.”

“ Shall not I speak ? ” his father said,
“ Who early chose a youthful wife,
And worked for her, and with her led
My happy life.

“ Aye, I will speak, for I was young
As thou art now, when I did hold
The prattling sweetness of thy tongue
Dearer than gold ;

“ And rosy from thy noonday sleep
Would bear thee to admiring kin,
And all thy pretty looks would keep
My heart within.

“ Then after, ’mid thy young allies—
For thee ambition flushed my brow—
I coveted the schoolboy prize
Far more than thou.

“ I thought for thee, I thought for all
My gamesome imps that round me grew :
The dews of blessing heaviest fall
Where care falls too.

“ And I that sent my boys away,
In youthful strength to earn their bread,
And died before the hair was grey
Upon my head—

“ I say to thee, though free from care,
A lonely lot, an aimless life,
The crowning comfort is not there—
Son, take a wife.”

“ Father beloved,” the son replied,
And failed to gather to his breast,
With arms in darkness searching wide,
The formless guest.

“ I am but free, as sorrow is,
To dry her tears, to laugh, to talk ;
And free, as sick men are, I wis,
To rise and walk.

“ And free, as poor men are, to buy
If they have nought wherewith to pay ;
Nor hope, the debt before they die,
To wipe away.

“ What ’vails it there are wives to win,
And faithful hearts for those to yearn,
Who find not aught thereto akin
To make return ?

“ Shall he take much who little gives,
And dwells in spirit far away,
When she that in his presence lives,
Doth never stray,

“ But waking, guideth as beseems
The happy house in order trim,
And tends her babes ; and sleeping, dreams
Of them, and him ?

“ O base, O cold,” ’—while thus he spake
The dream broke off, the vision fled ;
He carried on his speech awake
And sighing said—

“ I had—ah happy man !—I had
A precious jewel in my breast,
And while I kept it I was glad
At work, at rest !

“ Call it a heart, and call it strong
As upward stroke of eagle’s wing ;
Then call it weak, you shall not wrong
The beating thing.

“ In tangles of the jungle reed,
Whose heats are lit with tiger eyes,
In shipwreck drifting with the weed
’Neath rainy skies,

“ Still youthful manhood, fresh and keen,
At danger gazed with awed delight,
As if sea would not drown, I ween,
Nor serpent bite.

“ I had—ah happy ! but ’tis gone,
The priceless jewel ; one came by,
And saw and stood awhile to con
With curious eye,

“ And wished for it, and faintly smiled
From under lashes black as doom,
With subtle sweetness, tender, mild,
That did illume

“ The perfect face, and shed on it
A charm, half feeling, half surprise,
And brim with dreams the exquisite
Brown blessèd eyes.

“ Was it for this, no more but this
I took and laid it in her hand,
By dimples ruled, to hint submiss,
By frown unmanned ?

“ It was for this—and O farewell
The fearless foot, the present mind,
And steady will to breast the swell
And face the wind !

“ I gave the jewel from my breast,
She played with it a little while
As I sailed down into the west,
Fed by her smile ;

“ Then weary of it—far from land,
With sigh as deep as destiny,
She let it drop from her fair hand
Into the sea,

“ And watched it sink ; and I—and I,—
What shall I do, for all is vain ?
No wave will bring, no gold will buy,
No toil attain ;

“ Nor any diver reach to raise
My jewel from the blue abyss ;
Or could they, still I should but praise
Their work amiss.

“ Thrown, thrown away ! But I love yet
The fair, fair hand which did the deed :
That wayward sweetness to forget
Were bitter meed.

“ No, let it lie, and let the wave
Roll over it for evermore ;
Whelmed where the sailor hath his grave—
The sea her store.

“ My heart, my sometime happy heart !
And O for once let me complain,
I must forgo life's better part—
Man's dearer gain.

“ I worked afar that I might rear
A peaceful home on English soil ;
I laboured for the gold and gear—
I loved my toil.

“ For ever in my spirit spake
The natural whisper, ‘ Well ’twill be
When loving wife and children break
Their bread with thee ! ’

“ The gathered gold is turned to dross,
The wife hath faded into air,
My heart is thrown away, my loss
I cannot spare.

“ Not spare unsated thought her food—
No, not one rustle of the fold,
Nor scent of eastern sandalwood,
Nor gleam of gold ;

“ Nor quaint devices of the shawl,
Far less the drooping lashes meek ;
The gracious figure, lithe and tall,
The dimpled cheek ;

“ And all the wonders of her eyes
And sweet caprices of her air,
Albeit, indignant reason cries,
Fool ! have a care.

“ Fool ! join not madness to mistake :
Thou knowest she loved thee not a whit ;
Only that she thy heart might break—
She wanted it,

“ Only the conquered thing to chain
So fast that none might set it free,
Nor other woman there might reign.
And comfort thee.

“ Robbed, robbed of life’s illusions sweet ;
Love dead outside her closed door,
And passion fainting at her feet
To wake no more ;

“ What canst thou give that unknown bride
Whom thou didst work for in the waste,
Ere fated love was born, and cried—
Was dead, ungraced ?

“ No more but this, the partial care,
The natural kindness for its own,
The trust that waxeth unaware,
As worth is known :

“ Observance, and complacent thought
Indulgent, and the honour due
That many another man has brought
Who brought love too.

“ Nay, then, forbid it, Heaven ! ” he said,
“ The saintly vision fades from me ;
O bands and chains ! I cannot wed—
I am not free.” ’

With that he raised his face to view ;
‘ What think you,’ asking, ‘ of my tale ?
And was he right to let the dew
Of morn exhale,

‘ And burdened in the noontide sun,
The grateful shade of home forgo—
Could he be right ?—I ask as one
Who fain would know.’

He spoke to her and spoke to me ;
The rebel rose-hue dyed her cheek ;
The woven crown lay on her knee ;
She would not speak.

And I with doubtful pause—averse
To let occasion drift away—
I answered—‘ If his case were worse
Than word can say,

‘ Time is a healer of sick hearts,
And women have been known to choose,
With purpose to allay their smarts,
And tend their bruise,

‘ These for themselves. Content to give,
In their own lavish love complete,
Taking for sole prerogative
Their tendance sweet.

‘ Such meeting in their diadem
Of crowning love’s aethereal fire,
Himself he robs who robbeth them
Of their desire.

‘ Therefore the man who, dreaming, cried
Against his lot that evensong,
I judge him honest, and decide
That he was wrong.’

‘ When I am judged, ah may my fate,’
He whispered, ‘ in thy code be read !
Be thou both judge and advocate.’
Then turned, he said—

‘ Fair weaver ! ’ touching, while he spoke,
The woven crown, the weaving hand,
‘ And do you this decree revoke,
Or may it stand ?

‘ This friend, you ever think her right—
She is not wrong, then ? ’ Soft and low
The little trembling word took flight :
She answered, ‘ No.’

PRESENT

A meadow where the grass was deep
Rich, square, and golden to the view,
A belt of elms with level sweep
About it grew.

The sun beat down on it, the line
Of shade was clear beneath the trees ;
There, by a clustering eglantine,
We sat at ease.

And O the buttercups ! that field
O’ the cloth of gold, where pennons swam
Where France set up his liliated shield,
His oriflamb,

And Henry's lion-standard rolled :
What was it to their matchless sheen,
Their million million drops of gold
Among the green !

We sat at ease in peaceful trust,
For he had written, ' Let us meet ;
My wife grew tired of smoke and dust,
And London heat,

' And I have found a quiet grange,
Set back in meadows sloping west,
And there our little ones can range
And she can rest.

' Come down, that we may show the view,
And she may hear your voice again,
And talk her woman's talk with you
Along the lane.'

Since he had drawn with listless hand
The letter, six long years had fled,
And winds had blown about the sand,
And they were wed.

Two rosy urchins near him played,
Or watched, entranced, the shapely ships
That with his knife for them he made
Of elder slips.

And where the flowers were thickest shed,
Each blossom like a burnished gem,
A creeping baby reared its head,
And cooed at them.

And calm was on the father's face,
And love was in the mother's eyes ;
She looked and listened from her place,
In tender wise.

She did not need to raise her voice
That they might hear, she sat so nigh ;
Yet we could speak when 'twas our choice,
And soft reply.

Holding our quiet talk apart
Of household things ; till, all unsealed,
The guarded outworks of the heart
Began to yield ;

And much that prudence will not dip
The pen to fix and send away,
Passed safely over from the lip
That summer day.

‘ I should be happy,’ with a look
Towards her husband where he lay,
Lost in the pages of his book,
Soft did she say.

‘ I am, and yet no lot below
For one whole day eludeth care ;
To marriage all the stories flow,
And finish there :

‘ As if with marriage came the end,
The entrance into settled rest,
The calm to which love’s tossings tend,
The quiet breast.

‘ For me love played the low preludes,
Yet life began but with the ring,
Such infinite solitudes
Around it cling.

‘ I did not for my heart divine
Her destiny so meek to grow ;
The higher nature matched with mine
Will have it so.

‘ Still I consider it, and still
Acknowledge it my master made,
Above me by the steadier will
Of nought afraid.

‘ Above me by the candid speech ;
The temperate judgement of its own :
The keener thoughts that grasp and reach
At things unknown.

‘ But I look up and he looks down,
And thus our married eyes can meet ;
Unclothed his, and clear of frown,
And gravely sweet.

‘ And yet, O good, O wise and true !
I would for all my fealty,
That I could be as much to you
As you to me ;

‘ And knew the deep secure content
Of wives who have been hardly won,
And, long petitioned, gave assent,
Jealous of none.

‘ But proudly sure in all the earth
No other in that homage shares,
Nor other woman’s face or worth
Is prized as theirs.’

I said : ‘ *And yet no lot below
For one whole day eludeth care.*
Your thought.’ She answered, ‘ Even so.
I would beware

‘ Regretful questionings ; be sure
That very seldom do they rise,
Nor for myself do I endure—
I sympathize.

‘ For once ’—she turned away her head,
Across the grass she swept her hand—
There was a letter once,’ she said,
‘ Upon the sand.’

‘ There was, in truth, a letter writ
On sand,’ I said, ‘ and swept from view ;
But that same hand which fashioned it
Is given to you.

‘ Efface the letter ; wherefore keep
An image which the sands forgo ? ’
‘ Albeit that fear had seemed to sleep,’
She answered low,

‘ I could not choose but wake it now ;
For do but turn aside your face,
A house on yonder hilly brow
Your eyes may trace.

‘ The chestnut shelters it ; ah me,
That I should have so faint a heart !
But yestereve, as by the sea
I sat apart,

‘ I heard a name, I saw a hand
Of passing stranger point that way—
And will he meet her on the strand,
When late we stray ?

‘ For she is come, for she is there,
I heard it in the dusk, and heard
Admiring words, that named her fair,
But little stirred

‘ By beauty of the wood and wave,
And weary of an old man’s sway ;
For it was sweeter to enslave
Than to obey.’

—The voice of one that near us stood,
The rustle of a silken fold,
A scent of eastern sandalwood,
A gleam of gold !

A lady ! In the narrow space
Between the husband and the wife,
But nearest him—she showed a face
With dangers rife ;

A subtle smile that dimpling fled,
As night-black lashes rose and fell :
I looked, and to myself I said,
‘ The letter L.’

He, too, looked up, and with arrest
Of breath and motion held his gaze,
Nor cared to hide within his breast
His deep amaze ;

Nor spoke till on her near advance
His dark cheek flushed a ruddier hue ;
And with his change of countenance
Hers altered too.

‘ Lenore ! ’ his voice was like the cry
Of one entreating ; and he said
But that—then paused with such a sigh
As mourns the dead.

And seated near, with no demur
Of bashful doubt she silence broke,
Though I alone could answer her
When first she spoke.

She looked : her eyes were beauty’s own ;
She shed their sweetness into his ;
Nor spared the married wife one moan
That bitterest is.

She spoke, and lo, her loveliness
Methought she damaged with her tongue ;
And every sentence made it less,
So false they rung.

The rallying voice, the light demand,
Half flippant, half unsatisfied ;
The vanity sincere and bland—
The answers wide.

And now her talk was of the East,
And next her talk was of the sea ;
‘ And has the love for it increased
You shared with me ? ’

He answered not, but grave and still
With earnest eyes her face perused,
And locked his lips with steady will,
As one that mused—

That mused and wondered. Why his gaze
Should dwell on her, methought, was plain ;
But reason that should wonder raise
I sought in vain.

And near and near the children drew,
Attracted by her rich array,
And gems that trembling into view
Like raindrops lay.

He spoke : the wife her baby took
And pressed the little face to hers ;
What pain soe'er her bosom shook,
What jealous stirs

Might stab her heart, she hid them so,
The cooing babe a veil supplied ;
And if she listened none might know,
Or if she sighed ;

Or if forecasting grief and care
Unconscious solace thence she drew,
And lulled her babe, and unaware
Lulled sorrow too.

The lady, she interpreter
For looks or language wanted none,
If yet dominion stayed with her—
So lightly won ;

If yet the heart she wounded sore
Could yearn to her, and let her see
The homage that was evermore
Disloyalty ;

If sign would yield that it had bled,
Or rallied from the faithless blow,
Or sick or sullen stooped to wed,
She craved to know.

Now dreamy deep, now sweetly keen,
Her asking eyes would round him shine ;
But guarded lips and settled mien
Refused the sign.

And unbeguiled and unbetrayed,
The wonder yet within his breast,
It seemed a watchful part he played
Against her quest.

Until with accent of regret
She touched upon the past once more,
As if she dared him to forget
His dream of yore.

And words of little weight let fall
The fancy of the lower mind ;
How waxing life must needs leave all
Its best behind ;

How he had said that ' he would fain
(One morning on the halcyon sea)
That life would at a stand remain
Eternally ;

' And sails be mirrored in the deep,
As then they were, for evermore,
And happy spirits wake and sleep
Afar from shore :

' The well-contented heart be fed
Ever as then, and all the world
(It were not small) unshadowèd
When sails were furled.

' Your words '—a pause, and quietly
With touch of calm self-ridicule :
' It may be so—for then,' said he,
' I was a fool.'

With that he took his book, and left
An awkward silence to my care,
That soon I filled with questions deft
And debonair ;

And slid into an easy vein,
The favourite picture of the year ;
The grouse upon her lord's domain—
The salmon weir ;

Till she could feign a sudden thought
Upon neglected guests, and rise,
And make us her adieux, with nought
In her dark eyes

Acknowledging or shame or pain ;
But just unveiling for our view
A little smile of still disdain
As she withdrew.

Then nearer did the sunshine creep,
And warmer came the wafting breeze ;
The little babe was fast asleep
On mother's knees.

Fair was the face that o'er it leant,
The cheeks with beauteous blushes dyed ;
The downcast lashes, shyly bent,
That failed to hide

Some tender shame. She did not see ;
She felt his eyes that would not stir,
She looked upon her babe, and he
So looked at her.

So grave, so wondering, so content,
As one new waked to conscious life,
Whose sudden joy with fear is blent,
He said, ' My wife.'

' My wife, how beautiful you are !'
Then closer at her side reclined,
' The bold brown woman from afar
Comes, to me blind.

' And by comparison, I see
The majesty of matron grace,
And learn how pure, how fair can be
My own wife's face :

' Pure with all faithful passion, fair
With tender smiles that come and go ;
And comforting as April air
After the snow.

' Fool that I was ! my spirit frets
And marvels at the humbling truth,
That I have deigned to spend regrets
On my bruised youth.

‘ Its idol mocked thee, seated nigh,
And shamed me for the mad mistake ;
I thank my God He could deny,
And she forsake.

Ah, who am I, that God hath saved
Me from the doom I did desire,
And crossed the lot myself had craved,
To set me higher ?

‘ What have I done that He should bow
From heaven to choose a wife for me ?
And what deserved, He should endow
My home with THEE ?

‘ My wife ! ’ With that she turned her face
To kiss the hand about her neck ;
And I went down and sought the place
Where leaped the beck—

The busy beck, that still would run
And fall, and falter its refrain ;
And pause and shimmer in the sun,
And fall again.

It led me to the sandy shore,
We sang together, it and I—
‘ The daylight comes, the dark is o’er,
The shadows fly.’

I lost it on the sandy shore,
‘ O wife ! ’ its latest murmurs fell,
‘ O wife, be glad, and fear no more
The letter L.’

THE
HIGH TIDE ON THE COAST OF LINCOLNSHIRE
(1571)

THE old mayor climbed the belfry tower,
The ringers ran by two, by three ;
' Pull, if ye never pulled before ;
Good ringers, pull your best,' quoth he.
' Play uppe, play uppe, O Boston bells !
Ply all your changes, all your swells,
Play uppe " The Brides of Enderby ".'

Men say it was a stolen tyde—
The Lord that sent it, He knows all ;
But in myne ears doth still abide
The message that the bells let fall :
And there was nought of strange, beside
The flights of mews and peewits pied
By millions crouched on the old sea wall.

I sat and spun within the doore,
My thread brake off, I raised myne eyes ;
The level sun, like ruddy ore,
Lay sinking in the barren skies ;
And dark against day's golden death
She moved where Lindis wandereth,
My sonne's faire wife, Elizabeth.

' Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha !' calling,
Ere the early dewes were falling,
Farre away I heard her song.
' Cusha ! Cusha !' all along ;
Where the reedy Lindis floweth,
Floweth, floweth,
From the meads where melick groweth
Faintly came her milking song—

Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha ! ' calling,
 ' For the dews will soone be falling ;
 Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
 Mellow, mellow ;
 Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow ;
 Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot ;
 Quit the stalks of parsley hollow,
 Hollow, hollow ;
 Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
 From the clovers lift your head ;
 Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,
 Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
 Jetty, to the milking shed.'

If it be long, ay, long ago,
 When I beginne to think howe long,
 Againe I hear the Lindis flow,
 Swift as an arrowe, sharpe and strong ;
 And all the aire, it seemeth mee,
 Bin full of floating bells (sayth shee),
 That ring the tune of Enderby.

Alle fresh the level pasture lay,
 And not a shadowe mote be seene,
 Save where full fyve good miles away
 The steeple towered from out the greene,
 And lo ! the great bell farre and wide
 Was heard in all the country side
 That Saturday at eventide.

The swanherds where their sedges are
 Moved on in sunset's golden breath,
 The shepherde lads I heard afarre,
 And my sonne's wife, Elizabeth ;
 Till floating o'er the grassy sea
 Came downe that kyndly message free,
 The ' Brides of Mavis Enderby'.

Then some looked uppe into the sky,
 And all along where Lindis flows
 To where the goodly vessels lie,
 And where the lordly steeple shows.

They sayde, ‘ And why should this thing be ?
What danger lowers by land or sea ?
They ring the tune of Enderby !

‘ For evil news from Mablethorpe,
Of pyrate galleys warping down ;
For shippes ashore beyond the scorpe,
They have not spared to wake the towne :
But while the west bin red to see,
And storms be none, and pyrates flee,
Why ring “ The Brides of Enderby ” ? ’

I looked without, and lo ! my sonne
Came riding downe with might and main :
He raised a shout as he drew on,
Till all the welkin rang again,
‘ Elizabeth ! Elizabeth ! ’
(A sweeter woman ne’er drew breath
Than my sonne’s wife, Elizabeth.)

‘ The olde sea wall (he cried) is downe,
The rising tide comes on apace,
And boats adrift in yonder towne
Go sailing uppe the market-place.’
He shook as one that looks on death :
‘ God save you, mother ! ’ straight he saith ;
‘ Where is my wife, Elizabeth ? ’

‘ Good sonne, where Lindis winds away,
With her two bairns I marked her long ;
And ere yon bells beganne to play
Afar I heard her milking song.’
He looked across the grassy lea,
To right, to left, ‘ Ho Enderby ! ’
They rang ‘ The Brides of Enderby ’ !

With that he cried and beat his breast ;
For, lo ! along the river’s bed
A mighty eygre reared his crest,
And uppe the Lindis raging sped.
It swept with thunderous noises loud ;
Shaped like a curling snow-white cloud,
Or like a demon in a shroud.

And rearing Lindis backward pressed
Shook all her trembling bankes amaine ;
Then madly at the eygre's breast
Flung uppe her weltering walls again.
Then bankes came downe with ruin and rout—
Then beaten foam flew round about—
Then all the mighty floods were out.

So farre, so fast the eygre drave,
The heart had hardly time to beat,
Before a shallow seething wave
Sobbed in the grasses at oure feet :
The feet had hardly time to flee
Before it brake against the knee,
And all the world was in the sea.

Upon the roofe we sate that night,
The noise of bells went sweeping by :
I marked the lofty beacon light
Stream from the church tower, red and high—
A lurid mark and dread to see ;
And awsome bells they were to mee,
That in the dark rang ' Enderby '.

They rang the sailor lads to guide
From roofe to roofe who fearless rowed ;
And I—my sonne was at my side,
And yet the ruddy beacon glowed ;
And yet he moaned beneath his breath,
' O come in life, or come in death !
O lost ! my love, Elizabeth.'

And didst thou visit him no more ?
Thou didst, thou didst, my daughter deare ;
The waters laid thee at his doore,
Ere yet the early dawn was clear.
Thy pretty bairns in fast embrace,
The lifted sun shone on thy face,
Downe drifted to thy dwelling-place.

That flow strewed wrecks about the grass,
That ebbe swept out the flocks to sea ;
A fatal ebbe and flow, alas !
To manye more than myne and mee :

But each will mourn his own (she saith) ;
And sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.

I shall never hear her more
By the reedy Lindis shore,
'Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha !' calling,
Ere the early dewes be falling ;
I shall never hear her song,
'Cusha ! Cusha !' all along
Where the sunny Lindis floweth,
 Goeth, floweth ;
From the meads where melick groweth,
When the water winding down,
Onward floweth to the town.

I shall never see her more
Where the reeds and rushes quiver,
 Shiver, quiver ;
Stand beside the sobbing river,
Sobbing, throbbing, in its falling
To the sandy lonesome shore ;
I shall never hear her calling,

'Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
 Mellow, mellow ;
Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow ;
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot ;
Quit your pipes of parsley hollow,
 Hollow, hollow ;
Come uppe Lightfoot, rise and follow ;
 Lightfoot, Whitefoot,
From your clovers lift the head ;
Come uppe Jetty, follow, follow,
Jetty to the milking shed.'

AFTERNOON AT A PARSONAGE

(THE PARSON'S BROTHER, SISTER, AND TWO CHILDREN)

Preface

WHAT wonder man should fail to stay
 A nurseling wafted from above,
 The growth celestial come astray,
 That tender growth whose name is Love !

It is as if high winds in heaven
 Had shaken the celestial trees,
 And to this earth below had given
 Some feathered seeds from one of these.

O perfect love that 'dureth long !
 Dear growth, that shaded by the palms,
 And breathed on by the angel's song,
 Blooms on in heaven's eternal calms !

10

How great the task to guard thee here,
 Where wind is rough, and frost is keen,
 And all the ground with doubt and fear
 Is chequered, birth and death between !

Space is against thee—it can part ;
 Time is against thee—it can chill ;
 Words—they but render half the heart ;
 Deeds—they are poor to our rich will.

20

Merton. Though she had loved me, I had never bound
 Her beauty to my darkness ; that had been
 Too hard for her. Sadder to look so near
 Into a face all shadow, than to stand
 Aloof, and then withdraw, and afterwards
 Suffer forgetfulness to comfort her.
 I think so, and I loved her ; therefore I
 Have no complaint ; albeit she is not mine :
 And yet—and yet, withdrawing I would fain
 She would have pleaded duty—would have said,

30

‘ My father wills it ; ’ would have turned away,
 As lingering, or unwillingly ; for then
 She would have done no damage to the past :
 Now she has roughly used it—flung it down
 And brushed its bloom away. If she had said,
 ‘ Sir, I have promised ; therefore, lo ! my hand ’—
 Would I have taken it ? Ah no ! by all
 Most sacred, no !

I would for my sole share
 Have taken first her recollected blush
 The day I won her ; next her shining tears— 40
 The tears of our long parting ; and for all
 The rest—her cry, her bitter heart-sick cry,
 That day or night (I know not which it was,
 The days being always night), that darkest night,
 When being led to her I heard her cry,
 ‘ O blind ! blind ! blind ! ’

Go with thy chosen mate :
 The fashion of thy going nearly cured
 The sorrow of it. I am yet so weak
 That half my thoughts go after thee ; but not
 So weak that I desire to have it so. 50

JESSIE, seated at the piano, sings.

When the dimpled water slippeth,
 Full of laughter, on its way,
 And her wing the wagtail dippeth,
 Running by the brink at play ;
 When the poplar leaves atremble
 Turn their edges to the light,
 And the far-up clouds resemble
 Veils of gauze most clear and white ;
 And the sunbeams fall and flatter
 Woodland moss and branches brown, 60
 And the glossy finches chatter
 Up and down, up and down :
 Though the heart be not attending,
 Having music of her own,
 On the grass, through meadows wending,
 It is sweet to walk alone.
 When the falling waters utter
 Something mournful on their way,
 And departing swallows flutter,
 Taking leave of bank and brae ; 70

When the chaffinch idly sitteth
 With her mate upon the sheaves,
 And the wistful robin flitteth
 Over beds of yellow leaves ;
 When the clouds, like ghosts that ponder
 Evil fate, float by and frown,
 And the listless wind doth wander
 Up and down, up and down :
 Though the heart be not attending,
 Having sorrows of her own,
 Through the fields and fallows wending,
 It is sad to walk alone.

80

Merton. Blind ! blind ! blind !
 Oh ! sitting in the dark for evermore,
 And doing nothing—putting out a hand
 To feel what lies about me, and to say
 Not ‘ This is blue or red ’, but ‘ This is cold
 And this the sun is shining on, and this
 I know not till they tell its name to me ’.

O that I might behold once more, my God !
 The shining rulers of the night and day ;
 Or a star twinkling ; or an almond-tree,
 Pink with her blossom and alive with bees,
 Standing against the azure ! O my sight !
 Lost, and yet living in the sunlit cells
 Of memory—that only lightsome place
 Where lingers yet the dayspring of my youth :
 The years of mourning for thy death are long.

90

Be kind, sweet memory ! O desert me not !
 For oft thou show'st me lucent opal seas,
 Fringed with their cocoa-palms, and dwarf red crags,
 Whereon the placid moon doth ‘ rest her chin ’ ;
 For oft by favour of thy visitings
 I feel the dimness of an Indian night,
 And lo ! the sun is coming. Red as rust
 Between the latticed blind his presence burns,
 A ruby ladder running up the wall ;
 And all the dust, printed with pigeons' feet,
 Is reddened, and the crows that stalk anear
 Begin to trail for heat their glossy wings,
 And the red flowers give back at once the dew,

100

110

For night is gone, and day is born so fast,
 And is so strong, that, huddled as in flight,
 The fleeting darkness paleth to a shade,
 And while she calls to sleep and dreams 'Come on',
 Suddenly waked, the sleepers rub their eyes,
 Which having opened, lo ! she is no more.

O misery and mourning ! I have felt—
 Yes, I have felt like some deserted world
 That God had done with, and had cast aside 120
 To rock and stagger through the gulfs of space,
 He never looking on it any more—
 Untilled, no use, no pleasure, not desired,
 Nor lighted on by angels in their flight
 From heaven to happier planets, and the race
 That once had dwelt on it withdrawn or dead.
 Could such a world have hope that some blest day
 God would remember her, and fashion her
 Anew ?

Jessie. What, dearest ? Did you speak to me ?

Child. I think he spoke to us.

M. No, little elves, 130
 You were so quiet that I half forgot
 Your neighbourhood. What are you doing there ?

J. They sit together on the window-mat
 Nursing their dolls.

C. Yes, Uncle, our new dolls—
 Our best dolls, that you gave us.

M. Did you say
 The afternoon was bright ?

J. Yes, bright indeed !
 The sun is on the plane-tree, and it flames
 All red and orange.

C. I can see my father—
 Look ! look ! the leaves are falling on his gown.

M. Where ?

C. In the churchyard, Uncle—he is gone ;
 He passed behind the tower.

M. I heard a bell : 141
 There is a funeral, then, behind the church.

2nd Child. Are the trees sorry when their leaves
 drop off ?

1st Child. You talk such silly words ;—no, not at all.
There goes another leaf.

2nd Child. I did not see.

1st Child. Look ! on the grass, between the little hills,
Just where they planted Amy.

J. Amy died—
Dear little Amy ! when you talk of her,
Say, she is gone to heaven.

2nd Child. They planted her—
Will she come up next year ?

1st Child. No, not so soon ; 150
But some day God will call her to come up,
And then she will. Papa knows everything—
He said she would before he planted her.

2nd Child. It was at night she went to heaven. Last
night
We saw a star before we went to bed.

1st Child. Yes, Uncle, did you know ? A large bright
star,
And at her side she had some little ones—
Some young ones.

M. Young ones ! no, my little maid,
Those stars are very old.

1st Child. What ! all of them ?

M. Yes.

1st Child. Older than our father ?

M. Older, far. 160

2nd Child. They must be tired of shining there so
long.

Perhaps they wish they might come down.

J. Perhaps !
Dear children, talk of what you understand.

Come, I must lift the trailing creepers up
That last night's wind has loosened.

1st Child. May we help ?
Aunt, may we help to nail them ?

J. We shall see.
Go, find and bring the hammer, and some shreds.

[*Steps outside the window, lifts a branch, and sings.*]

Should I change my allegiance for rancour
If fortune changes her side ?

Or should I, like a vessel at anchor, 170
 Turn with the turn of the tide ?
 Lift ! O lift, thou lowering sky ;
 An thou wilt, thy gloom forgo !
 An thou wilt not, he and I
 Need not part for drifts of snow.

M. [*within*] Lift ! no, thou lowering sky, thou wilt
 not lift—

Thy motto readeth, ' Never.'

Children. Here they are !

Here are the nails ! and may we help ?

J. You shall,

If I should want help

1st Child. Will you want it, then ?

Please want it—we like nailing.

2nd Child. Yes, we do. 180

J. It seems I ought to want it ; hold the bough,
 And each may nail in turn.

[*Sings.*]

Like a daisy I was, near him growing :

Must I move because favours flag,

And be like a brown wall-flower blowing

Far out of reach in a crag ?

Lift ! O lift, thou lowering sky ;

An thou canst, thy blue regain !

An thou canst not, he and I

Need not part for drops of rain. 190

1st Child. Now, have we nailed enough ?

J. [*trains the creepers*] Yes, you may go ;

But do not play too near the churchyard path.

M. [*within*] Even misfortune does not strike so near

As my dependence. O, in youth and strength

To sit a timid coward in the dark,

And feel before I set a cautious step !

It is so very dark, so far more dark

Than any night that day comes after—night

In which there would be stars, or else at least

The silvered portion of a sombre cloud

Through which the moon is plunging. 200

J. [*entering*] Merton !

M. Yes.

J. Dear Merton, did you know that I could hear ?

M. No : e'en my solitude is not mine now,
 And if I be alone is ofttimes doubt.
 Alas ! far more than eyesight have I lost ;
 For manly courage drifteth after it—
 E'en as a splintered spar would drift away
 From some dismasted wreck. Hear, I complain—
 Like a weak ailing woman I complain.

J. For the first time.

M. I cannot bear the dark. 210

J. My brother ! you do bear it—bear it well—
 Have borne it twelve long months, and not complained.
 Comfort your heart with music : all the air
 Is warm with sunbeams where the organ stands.
 You like to feel them on you. Come and play.

M. My fate, my fate is lonely !

J. So it is—

I know it is.

M. And pity breaks my heart.

J. Does it, dear Merton ?

M. Yes, I say it does.

What ! do you think I am so dull of ear
 That I can mark no changes in the tones 220
 That reach me ? Once I liked not girlish pride
 And that coy quiet, chary of reply,
 That held me distant : now the sweetest lips
 Open to entertain me—fairest hands
 Are proffered me to guide.

J. That is not well ?

M. No : give me coldness, pride, or still disdain,
 Gentle withdrawal. Give me anything
 But this—a fearless, sweet, confiding ease,
 Whereof I may expect, I may exact, 230
 Considerate care and have it—gentle speech,
 And have it. Give me anything but this !
 For they who give it, give it in the faith
 That I will not misdeem them, and forget
 My doom so far as to perceive thereby
 Hope of a wife. They make this thought too plain ;
 They wound me—O they cut me to the heart !
 When have I said to any one of them,
 ' I am a blind and desolate man ;—come here,
 I pray you—be as eyes to me ' ? When said,

Even to her whose pitying voice is sweet 240
To my dark ruined heart, as must be hands
That clasp a lifelong captive's through the grate,
And who will ever lend her delicate aid
To guide me, dark encumbrance that I am !—
When have I said to her, ' Comforting voice,
Belonging to a face unknown, I pray
Be my wife's voice ' ?

J. Never, my brother—no,
You never have !

M. What could she think of me
If I forgot myself so far ? or what
Could she reply ?

J. You ask not as men ask 250
Who care for an opinion, else perhaps,
Although I am not sure—although, perhaps,
I have no right to give one—I should say
She would reply, ' I will ! '

Afterthought.

Man dwells apart, though not alone,
He walks among his peers unread ;
The best of thoughts which he hath known,
For lack of listeners are not said.

Yet dreaming on earth's clustered isles, 259
He saith, ' They dwell not lone like men,
Forgetful that their sunflecked smiles
Flash far beyond each other's ken.'

He looks on God's eternal suns
That sprinkle the celestial blue,
And saith, ' Ah ! happy shining ones,
' I would that men were grouped like you ! '

Yet this is sure : the loveliest star
That clustered with its peers we see,
Only because from us so far
Doth near its fellows seem to be. 270

SONGS OF SEVEN

SEVEN TIMES ONE. EXULTATION

THERE 's no dew left on the daisies and clover,
 There 's no rain left in heaven :
 I've said my ' seven times ' over and over,
 Seven times one are seven.

I am old, so old, I can write a letter ;
 My birthday lessons are done ;
 The lambs play always, they know no better ;
 They are only one times one.

O moon ! in the night I have seen you sailing
 And shining so round and low ;
 You were bright ! ah bright ! but your light is failing—
 You are nothing now but a bow.

You moon, have you done something wrong in heaven
 That God has hidden your face ?
 I hope if you have you will soon be forgiven,
 And hine again in your place.

O velvet bee, you're a dusty fellow,
 You've powdered your legs with gold !
 O brave marsh marybuds, rich and yellow,
 Give me your money to hold !

O columbine, open your folded wrapper,
 Where two twin turtle-doves dwell !
 O cuckoopint, toll me the purple clapper
 That hangs in your clear green bell !

And show me your nest with the young ones in it ;
 I will not steal them away ;
 I am old ! you may trust me, linnet, linnet—
 I am seven times one to-day.

SEVEN TIMES TWO. ROMANCE

You bells in the steeple, ring, ring out your changes,
 How many soever they be,
 And let the brown meadow-lark's note as he ranges
 Come over, come over to me.

Yet bird's clearest carol by fall or by swelling
No magical sense conveys,
And bells have forgotten their old art of telling
The fortune of future days.

'Turn again, turn again,' once they rang cheerily,
While a boy listened alone ;
Made his heart yearn again, musing so wearily
All by himself on a stone.

Poor bells ! I forgive you ; your good days are over,
And mine, they are yet to be ;
No listening, no longing shall aught, aught discover :
You leave the story to me.

The foxglove shoots out of the green matted heather
Preparing her hoods of snow ;
She was idle, and slept till the sunshiny weather :
O, children take long to grow.

I wish, and I wish that the spring would go faster,
Nor long summer bide so late ;
And I could grow on like the foxglove and aster
For some things are ill to wait.

I wait for the day when dear hearts shall discover,
While dear hands are laid on my head ;
'The child is a woman, the book may close over,
For all the lessons are said.'

I wait for my story—the birds cannot sing it
Not one, as he sits on the tree ;
The bells cannot ring it, but long years, O bring it
Such as I wish it to be.

SEVEN TIMES THREE. LOVE

I leaned out of window, I smelt the white clover,
Dark, dark was the garden, I saw not the gate,
'Now, if there be footsteps, he comes, my one lover—
Hush, nightingale, hush ! O, sweet nightingale wait
Till I listen and hear
If a step draweth near,
For my love he is late !

‘ The skies in the darkness stoop nearer and nearer,
 A cluster of stars hangs like fruit in the tree,
 The fall of the water comes sweeter, comes clearer :
 To what art thou listening, and what dost thou see ?
 Let the star-clusters grow,
 Let the sweet waters flow,
 And cross quickly to me.

‘ You night-moths that hover where honey brims over
 From sycamore blossoms, or settle or sleep ;
 You glowworms, shine out, and the pathway discover
 To him that comes darkling along the rough steep.
 Ah, my sailor, make haste,
 For the time runs to waste,
 And my love lieth deep—

‘ Too deep for swift telling ; and yet, my one lover,
 I’ve conned thee an answer, it waits thee to-night.’
 By the sycamore passed he, and through the white
 clover,
 Then all the sweet speech I had fashioned took flight ;
 But I’ll love him more, more
 Than e’er wife loved before,
 Be the days dark or bright.

SEVEN TIMES FOUR. MATERNITY

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,
 Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall !
 When the wind wakes how they rock in the grasses,
 And dance with the cuckoo-buds slender and small !
 Here’s two bonny boys, and here’s mother’s own lasses,
 Eager to gather them all.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups !
 Mother shall thread them a daisy chain ;
 Sing them a song of the pretty hedge-sparrow,
 That loved her brown little ones, loved them full fain ;
 Sing, ‘ Heart, thou art wide though the house be but
 narrow ’—
 Sing once, and sing it again.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,
Sweet wagging cowslips, they bend and they bow ;
A ship sails afar over warm ocean waters,
And haply one musing doth stand at her prow.
O bonny brown sons, and O sweet little daughters,
Maybe he thinks on you now !

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall—
A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure,
And fresh hearts unconscious of sorrow and thrall !
Send down on their pleasure smiles passing its measure,
God that is over us all !

SEVEN TIMES FIVE. WIDOWHOOD

I sleep and rest, my heart makes moan
Before I am well awake ;
' Let me bleed ! O let me alone,
Since I must not break ! '

For children wake, though fathers sleep
With a stone at foot and at head :
O sleepless God, for ever keep,
Keep both living and dead !

I lift mine eyes, and what to see
But a world happy and fair !
I have not wished it to mourn with me—
Comfort is not there.

O what anear but golden brooms,
And a waste of reedy rills !
O what afar but the fine glooms
On the rare blue hills !

I shall not die, but live forlore—
How bitter it is to part !
O to meet thee, my love, once more !
O my heart, my heart !

No more to hear, no more to see !
 O that an echo might wake
 And waft one note of thy psalm to me
 Ere my heart-strings break !

I should know it how faint soe'er,
 And with angel voices blent ;
 O once to feel thy spirit anear ;
 I could be content !

Or once between the gates of gold,
 While an entering angel trod,
 But once—thee sitting to behold
 On the hills of God !

SEVEN TIMES SIX. GIVING IN MARRIAGE

To bear, to nurse, to rear,
 To watch, and then to lose :
 To see my bright ones disappear,
 Drawn up like morning dews—
 To bear, to nurse, to rear,
 To watch, and then to lose :
 This have I done when God drew near
 Among his own to choose.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
 And with thy lord depart
 In tears that he, as soon as shed,
 Will let no longer smart.—
 To hear, to heed, to wed,
 This while thou didst I smiled,
 For now it was not God who said,
 ' Mother, give ME thy child.'

O fond, O fool, and blind,
 To God I gave with tears ;
 But when a man like grace would find,
 My soul put by her fears—
 O fond, O fool, and blind,
 God guards in happier spheres ;
 That man will guard where he did bind
 Is hope for unknown years.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
Fair lot that maidens choose,
Thy mother's tenderest words are said,
Thy face no more she views ;
Thy mother's lot, my dear,
She doth in nought accuse ;
Her lot to bear, to nurse, to rear,
To love—and then to lose.

SEVEN TIMES SEVEN. LONGING FOR HOME

I

A song of a boat :—

There was once a boat on a billow :
Lightly she rocked to her port remote,
And the foam was white in her wake like snow,
And her frail mast bowed when the breeze would blow
And bent like a wand of willow.

II

I shaded mine eyes one day when a boat
Went curtseying over the billow,
I marked her course till a dancing mote
She faded out on the moonlit foam,
And I stayed behind in the dear loved home ;
And my thoughts all day were about the boat
And my dreams upon the pillow.

III

I pray you hear my song of a boat,
For it is but short :—
My boat, you shall find none fairer afloat,
In river or port.
Long I looked out for the lad she bore,
On the open desolate sea,
And I think he sailed to the heavenly shore,
For he came not back to me—
Ah me !

IV

A song of a nest :—
There was once a nest in a hollow :
Down in the mosses and knot-grass pressed,
Soft and warm, and full to the brim—
Vetches leaned over it purple and dim,
With buttercup buds to follow.

V

I pray you hear my song of a nest,
For it is not long :—
You shall never light, in a summer quest
The bushes among—
Shall never light on a prouder sitter,
A fairer nestful, nor ever know
A softer sound than their tender twitter,
That wind-like did come and go.

VI

I had a nestful once of my own,
Ah happy, happy I !
Right dearly I loved them : but when they were grown
They spread out their wings to fly—
O, one after one they flew away
Far up to the heavenly blue,
To the better country, the upper day,
And—I wish I was going too

VII

I pray you, what is the nest to me,
My empty nest ?
And what is the shore where I stood to see
My boat sail down to the west ?
Can I call that home where I anchor yet,
Though my good man has sailed ?
Can I call that home where my nest was set,
Now all its hope hath failed ?
Nay, but the port where my sailor went,
And the land where my nestlings be :
There is the home where my thoughts are sent,
The only home for me—

Ah me ! ,

A COTTAGE IN A CHINE

WE reached the place by night,
 And heard the waves breaking :
 They came to meet us with candles alight
 To show the path we were taking.
 A myrtle, trained on the gate, was white
 With tufted flowers down shaking.

With head beneath her wing,
 A little wren was sleeping—
 So near, I had found it an easy thing
 To steal her for my keeping
 From the myrtle bough that with easy swing
 Across the path was sweeping.

Down rocky steps rough-hewed,
 Where cup-mosses flowered,
 And under the trees, all twisted and rude,
 Wherewith the dell was dowered,
 They led us, where deep in its solitude
 Lay the cottage, leaf-embowered.

The thatch was all bespread
 With climbing passion flowers ,
 They were wet, and glistened with raindrops, shed
 That day in genial showers.
 ‘ Was never a sweeter nest,’ we said,
 ‘ Than this little nest of ours.’

We laid us down to sleep :
 But as for me—waking,
 I marked the plunge of the muffled deep
 On its sandy reaches breaking ;
 For heart-joyance doth sometimes keep
 From slumber, like heart-aching.

And I was glad that night,
 With no reason ready,
 To give my own heart for its deep delight,
 That flowed like some tidal eddy,
 Or shone like a star that was rising bright
 With comforting radiance steady.

But on a sudden—hark !
Music struck asunder
Those meshes of bliss, and I wept in the dark
So sweet was the unseen wonder ;
So swiftly it touched, as if struck at a mark,
The trouble that joy kept under.

I rose—the moon outshone :
I saw the sea heaving,
And a little vessel sailing alone,
The small crisp wavelet cleaving ;
'Twas she as she sailed to her port unknown—
Was that track of sweetness leaving.

We know they music made
In heaven, ere man's creation ;
But when God threw it down to us that strayed,
It dropt with lamentation,
And ever since doth its sweetness shade
With sighs for its first station.

Its joy suggests regret—
Its most for more is yearning ;
And it brings to the soul that its voice hath met,
No rest that cadence learning,
But a conscious part in the sighs that fret
Its nature for returning.

O Eve, sweet Eve ! methought
When sometimes comfort winning,
As she watched the first children's tender sport,
Sole joy born since her sinning,
If a bird anear them sang, it brought
The pang as at beginning.

While swam the unshed tear,
Her prattlers little heeding,
Would murmur, ' This bird, with its carol clear,
When the red clay was kneaden,
And God made Adam our father dear,
Sang to him thus in Eden.'

The moon went in—the sky
And earth and sea hiding,
I laid me down, with the yearning sigh
Of that strain in my heart abiding ;
I slept, and the barque that had sailed so nigh
In my dream was ever gliding.

I slept, but waked amazed,
With sudden noise frightened,
And voices without, and a flash that dazed
My eyes from candles lighted.
'Ah! surely,' methought, 'by these shouts upraised,
Some travellers are benighted.'

A voice was at my side—
'Waken, madam, waken !
The long-prayed-for ship at her anchor doth ride.
Let the child from its rest be taken,
For the captain doth weary for babe and for bride—
Waken, madam, waken !

'The home you left but late,
He speeds to it light-hearted ;
By the wires he sent this news, and straight
To you with it they started.'
O joy for a yearning heart too great,
O union for the parted !

We rose up in the night,
The morning star was shining ;
We carried the child in its slumber light
Out by the myrtles twining :
Orion over the sea hung bright,
And glorious in declining.

Mother, to meet her son,
Smiled first, then wept the rather ;
And wife, to bind up those links undone,
And cherished words to gather,
And to show the face of her little one,
That had never seen its father.

That cottage in a chine,
We were not to behold it ;
But there may the purest of sunbeams shine,
May freshest flowers enfold it,
For sake of the news which our hearts must twine
With the bower where we were told it !

Now oft, left lone again,
Sit mother and sit daughter,
And bless the good ship that sailed over the main,
And the favouring winds that brought her ;
While still some new beauty they fable and feign
For the cottage by the water.

PERSEPHONE

Written for THE PORTFOLIO SOCIETY, January 1862

Subject given—‘ Light and Shade ’

SHE stepped upon Sicilian grass,
Demeter’s daughter fresh and fair,
A child of light, a radiant lass,
And gamesome as the morning air.
The daffodils were fair to see,
They nodded lightly on the lea,
Persephone—Persephone !

Lo ! one she marked of rarer growth
Than orchis or anemone ;
For it the maiden left them both,
And parted from her company.
Drawn nigh she deemed it fairer still,
And stooped to gather by the rill
The daffodil, the daffodil.

What ailed the meadow that it shook ?
What ailed the air of Sicily ?
She wondered by the brattling brook,
And trembled with the trembling lea.

The coal-black horses rise—they rise :
O mother, mother ! ' low she cries—
Persephone—Persephone !

' O light, light, light ! ' she cries, ' farewell ;
The coal-black horses wait for me.
O shade of shades, where I must dwell,
Demeter, mother, far from thee !
Ah, fated doom that I fulfil !
Ah, fateful flower beside the rill !
The daffodil, the daffodil ! '

What ails her that she comes not home ?
Demeter seeks her far and wide,
And gloomy-browed doth ceaseless roam
From many a morn till eventide.
' My life, immortal though it be,
Is nought,' she cries, ' for want of thee,
Persephone—Persephone !

' Meadows of Enna, let the rain
No longer drop to feed your rills,
Nor dew refresh the fields again,
With all their nodding daffodils !
Fade, fade and droop, O lilied lea,
Where thou, dear heart, wert reft from me—
Persephone—Persephone ! '

She reigns upon her dusky throne,
'Mid shades of heroes dread to see ;
Among the dead she breathes alone,
Persephone—Persephone !
Or seated on the Elysian hill
She dreams of earthly daylight still,
And murmurs of the daffodil.

A voice in Hades soundeth clear,
The shadows mourn and flit below ;
It cries—' Thou Lord of Hades, hear,
And let Demeter's daughter go.
The tender corn upon the lea
Droops in her goddess gloom when she
Cries for her lost Persephone.

‘ From land to land she raging flies,
The green fruit falleth in her wake,
And harvest fields beneath her eyes
To earth the grain unripened shake.
Arise, and set the maiden free ;
Why should the world such sorrow dree
By reason of Persephone ? ’

He takes the cleft pomegranate seeds :
‘ Love, eat with me this parting day ; ’
Then bids them fetch the coal-black steeds—
‘ Demeter’s daughter, wouldst away ? ’
The gates of Hades set her free ;
‘ She will return full soon,’ saith he—
‘ My wife, my wife Persephone.’

Low laughs the dark king on his throne—
‘ I gave her of pomegranate seeds.’
Demeter’s daughter stands alone
Upon the fair Eleusian meads.
Her mother meets her. ‘ Hail ! ’ saith she ;
‘ And doth our daylight dazzle thee,
My love, my child Persephone ?

‘ What moved thee, daughter, to forsake
Thy fellow-maids that fatal morn,
And give thy dark lord power to take
Thee living to his realm forlorn ? ’
Her lips reply without her will,
As one addressed who slumbereth still—
‘ The daffodil, the daffodil ! ’

Her eyelids droop with light oppressed,
And sunny wafts that round her stir,
Her cheek upon her mother’s breast—
Demeter’s kisses comfort her.
Calm Queen of Hades, art thou she
Who stepped so lightly on the lea—
Persephone, Persephone ?

When, in her destined course, the moon
Meets the deep shadow of this world,
And labouring on doth seem to swoon
Through awful wastes of dimness whirled—

Emerged at length, no trace hath she
Of that dark hour of destiny,
Still silvery sweet—Persephone.

The greater world may near the less,
And draw it through her weltering shade,
But not one biding trace impress
Of all the darkness that she made ;
The greater soul that draweth thee
Hath left his shadow plain to see
On thy fair face, Persephone !

Demeter sighs, but sure 'tis well
The wife should love her destiny ;
They part, and yet, as legends tell,
She mourns her lost Persephone ;
While chant the maids of Enna still—
' O fateful flower beside the rill—
The daffodil, the daffodil ! '

A SEA SONG

OLD ALBION sat on a crag of late,
And sung out—' Ahoy ! ahoy !
Long life to the captain, good luck to the mate,
And this to my sailor boy !
Come over, come home,
Through the salt sea foam,
My sailor, my sailor boy.

' Here 's a crown to be given away, I ween,
A crown for my sailor's head,
And all for the worth of a widowed queen,
And the love of the noble dead,
And the fear and fame
Of the island's name
Where my boy was born and bred.

‘ Content thee, content thee, let it alone,
 Thou marked for a choice so rare ;
 Though treaties be treaties, never a throne
 Was proffered for cause as fair.
 Yet come to me home,
 Through the salt sea foam,
 For the Greek must ask elsewhere.

‘ ’Tis pity, my sailor, but who can tell ?
 Many lands they look to me ;
 One of these might be wanting a Prince as well,
 But that ’s as hereafter may be.’
 She raised her white head
 And laughed ; and she said
 ‘ That ’s as hereafter may be.’

BROTHERS, AND A SERMON

It was a village built in a green rent,
 Between two cliffs that skirt the dangerous bay.

A reef of level rock runs out to sea,
 And you may lie on it and look sheer down,
 Just where the ‘ Grace of Sunderland ’ was lost,
 And see the elastic banners of the dulse
 Rock softly, and the orange star-fish creep
 Across the laver, and the mackerel shoot
 Over and under it, like silver boats
 Turning at will and plying under water.

10

There on that reef we lay upon our breasts,
 My brother and I, and half the village lads,
 For an old fisherman had called to us
 With ‘ Sirs, the syle be come.’ ‘ And what are they ? ’
 My brother said. ‘ Good lack ! ’ the old man cried,
 And shook his head ; ‘ to think you gentlefolk
 Should ask what syle be ! Look you ; I can’t say
 What syle be called in your fine dictionaries,
 Nor what name God Almighty calls them by
 When their food’s ready and He sends them south ;

20

But our folk call them syle, and nought but syle,
And when they're grown, why then we call them herring.
I tell you, Sir, the water is as full
Of them as pastures be of blades of grass ;
You'll draw a score out in a landing net,
And none of them be longer than a pin.

' Syle ! ay, indeed, we should be badly off,
I reckon, and so would' God Almighty's gulls,'
He grumbled on in his quaint piety,
' And all his other birds, if He should say 30
I will not drive my syle into the south ;
The fisher folk may do without my syle,
And do without the shoals of fish it draws
To follow and feed on it.'

This said, we made

Our peace with him by means of two small coins,
And down we ran and lay upon the reef,
And saw the swimming infants, emerald green,
In separate shoals, the scarcely turning ebb
Bringing them in ; while sleek, and not intent 40
On chase, but taking that which came to hand,
The full-fed mackerel and the gurnet swam
Between ; and settling on the polished sea,
A thousand snow-white gulls sat lovingly
In social rings, and twittered while they fed.
The village dogs and ours, elate and brave,
Lay looking over, barking at the fish ;
Fast, fast the silver creatures took the bait,
And when they heaved and floundered on the rock,
In beauteous misery, a sudden pat
Some shaggy pup would deal, then back away, 50
At distance eye them with sagacious doubt,
And shrink half frightened from the slippery things.

And so we lay from ebb-tide, till the flow
Rose high enough to drive us from the reef ;
The fisher lads went home across the sand ;
We climbed the cliff, and sat an hour or more,
Talking and looking down. It was not talk
Of much significance, except for this—
That we had more in common than of old,

For both were tired, I with overwork, 60
 He with inaction ; I was glad at heart
 To rest, and he was glad to have an ear
 That he could grumble to, and half in jest
 Rail at entails, deplore the fate of heirs,
 And the misfortune of a good estate—
 Misfortune that was sure to pull him down,
 Make him a dreamy, selfish, useless man :
 Indeed he felt himself deteriorate
 Already. Thereupon he sent down showers
 Of clattering stones, to emphasize his words, 70
 And leap the cliffs and tumble noisily
 Into the seething wave. And as for me
 I railed at him and at ingratitude,
 While rifling of the basket he had slung
 Across his shoulders ; then with right good will
 We fell to work, and feasted like the gods,
 Like labourers, or like eager workhouse folk
 At Yuletide dinner ; or, to say the whole
 At once, like tired, hungry, healthy youth,
 Until the meal being o'er, the tilted flask 80
 Drained of its latest drop, the meat and bread
 And ruddy cherries eaten, and the dogs
 Mumbling the bones, this elder brother of mine—
 This man, that never felt an ache or pain
 In his broad, well-knit frame, and never knew
 The trouble of an unforgiven grudge,
 The sting of a regretted meanness, nor
 The desperate struggle of the unendowed
 For place and for possession—he began
 To sing a rhyme that he himself had wrought ; 90
 Sending it out with cogitative pause,
 As if the scene where he had shaped it first
 Had rolled it back on him, and meeting it
 Thus unaware, he was of doubtful mind
 Whether his dignity it well beseeemed
 To sing of pretty maiden :

Goldilocks sat on the grass,
 Tying up of posies rare ;
 Hardly could a sunbeam pass
 Through the cloud that was her hair.

Purple orchis lasteth long,
 Primrose flowers are pale and clear ;
 O the maiden sang a song
 It would do you good to hear !

Sad before her leaned the boy,
 ' Goldilocks that I love well,
 Happy creature fair and coy,
 Think o' me, Sweet Amabel.'
 Goldilocks she shook apart,
 Looked with doubtful, doubtful eyes ; 110
 Like a blossom in her heart
 Opened out her first surprise.

As a gloriole sign o' grace,
 Goldilocks, ah fall and flow,
 On the blooming, childlike face,
 Dimple, dimple, come and go.
 Give her time ; on grass and sky
 Let her gaze if she be fain :
 As they looked ere he drew nigh,
 They will never look again. 120

Ah ! the playtime she has known,
 While her goldilocks grew long,
 Is it like a nestling flown,
 Childhood over like a song ?
 Yes, the boy may clear his brow,
 Though she thinks to say him nay,
 When she sighs, ' I cannot now—
 Come again some other day.'

' Hold ! there,' he cried, half angry with himself ;
 ' That ending goes amiss : ' then turned again 130
 To the old argument that we had held—
 ' Now look you ! ' said my brother, ' you may talk
 Till, weary of the talk, I answer " Ay,
 There's reason in your words ; " and you may talk
 Till I go on to say, " This should be so ; "
 And you may talk till I shall further own
 " It is so ; yes, I am a lucky dog ! "
 Yet not the less shall I next morning wake,
 And with a natural and fervent sigh,
 Such as you never heaved, I shall exclaim 140
 " What an unlucky dog I am ! " ' And here
 He broke into a laugh. ' But as for you—
 You ! on all hands you have the best of me ,
 Men have not robbed you of your birthright—work,

Nor ravaged in old days a peaceful field,
 Nor wedded heiresses against their will,
 Nor sinned, nor slaved, nor stooped, nor overreached,
 That you might drone a useless life away
 'Mid half a score of bleak and barren farms
 And half a dozen bogs.'

'O rare ! ' I cried ;

150

' His wrongs go nigh to make him eloquent :
 Now we behold how far bad actions reach !
 Because five hundred years ago a Knight
 Drove geese and beeves out from a Franklin's yard :
 Because three hundred years ago a squire—
 Against her will, and for her fair estate—
 Married a very ugly, red-haired maid,
 The blest inheritor of all their pelf,
 While in the full enjoyment of the same,
 Sighs on his own confession every day.
 He cracks no egg without a moral sigh,
 Nor eats of beef but thinking on that wrong ;
 Then, yet the more to be revenged on them,
 And shame their ancient pride, if they should know,
 Works hard as any horse for his degree,
 And takes to writing verses.'

160

' Ay,' he said,

Half laughing at himself. ' Yet you and I,
 But for those tresses which enrich us yet
 With somewhat of the hue that partial fame
 Calls auburn when it shines on heads of heirs,
 But when it flames round brows of younger sons,
 Just red—mere red ; why, but for this, I say,
 And but for selfish getting of the land,
 And beggarly entailing it, we two,
 To-day well fed, well grown, well dressed, well read,
 We might have been two horny-handed boors—
 Lean, clumsy, ignorant, and ragged boors—
 Planning for moonlight nights a poaching scheme,
 Or soiling our dull souls and consciences
 With plans for pilfering a cottage roost.

170

180

' What, chorus ! are you dumb ? you should have cried,
 " So good comes out of evil ; " ' and with that,
 As if all pauses it was natural
 To seize for songs, his voice broke out again :

Coo, dove, to thy married mate—
 She has two warm eggs in her nest :
 Tell her the hours are few to wait
 Ere life shall dawn on their rest ;
 And thy young shall peck at the shells, elate
 With a dream of her brooding breast. 190

Coo, dove, for she counts the hours,
 Her fair wings ache for flight :
 By day the apple has grown in the flowers,
 And the moon has grown by night,
 And the white drift settled from hawthorn bowers,
 Yet they will not seek the light.

Coo, dove ; but what of the sky ?
 And what if the storm-wind swell,
 And the reeling branch come down from on high
 To the grass where daisies dwell, 200
 And the brood belovèd should with them lie
 Or ever they break the shell ?

Coo, dove ; and yet black clouds lower,
 Like fate, on the far-off sea :
 Thunder and wind they bear to thy bower,
 As on wings of destiny.
 Ah, what if they break in an evil hour,
 As they broke over mine and me ?

What next ?—we started like to girls, for lo !
 The creaking voice, more harsh than rusty crane, 210
 Of one who stooped behind us, cried aloud,
 ‘ Good lack ! how sweet the gentleman does sing—
 So loud and sweet, ’tis like to split his throat.
 Why, Mike ’s a child to him, a two-years child—
 A Chrisom child ’

‘ Who ’s Mike ? ’ my brother growled
 A little roughly. Quoth the fisherman—
 ‘ Mike, Sir ? he ’s just a fisher lad, no more ;
 But he can sing, when he takes on to sing,
 So loud there ’s not a sparrow in the spire
 But needs must hear. Sir, if I might make bold, 220
 I’d ask what song that was you sung. My mate,
 As we were shoving off the mackerel boats,
 Said he, “ I’ll wager that ’s the sort o’ song
 They kept their hearts up with in the Crimea.” ’

‘ There, fisherman,’ quoth I, ‘ he showed his wit,
 Your mate ; he marked the sound of savage war—

Gunpowder, groans, hot-shot, and bursting shells,
And "murderous messages" delivered by
Spent balls that break the heads of dreaming men.'

'Ay, ay, Sir!' quoth the fisherman. 'Have done!' 230
My brother. And I—'The gift belongs to few
Of sending farther than the words can reach
Their spirit and expression;' still—'Have done!'
He cried; and then, 'I rolled the rubbish out
More loudly than the meaning warranted,
To air my lungs—I thought not on the words.'

Then said the fisherman, who missed the point,
'So Mike rolls out the psalm; you'll hear him, Sir,
Please God you live till Sunday.'

'Even so :

And you, too, fisherman; for here, they say, 240
You all are church-goers.'

'Surely, Sir,' quoth he,
Took off his hat, and stroked his old white head
And wrinkled face; then sitting by us said,
As one that utters with a quiet mind
Unchallenged truth—'Tis lucky for the boats.'

The boats! 'tis lucky for the boats! Our eyes
Were drawn to him as either fain would say,
What! do they send the psalm up in the spire,
And pray because 'tis lucky for the boats?

But he, the brown old man, the wrinkled man, 250
That all his life had been a church-goer,
Familiar with celestial cadences,
Informed of all he could receive, and sure
Of all he understood—he sat content,
And we kept silence. In his reverend face
There was a simpleness we could not sound;
Much truth had passed him overhead; some error
He had trod under foot;—God comfort him!
He could not learn of us, for we were young
And he was old, and so we gave it up; 260
And the sun went into the west, and down
Upon the water stooped an orange cloud,

And the pale milky reaches flushed, as glad
 To wear its colours ; and the sultry air
 Went out to sea, and puffed the sails of ships
 With thymy wafts, the breath of trodden grass :
 It took moreover music, for across
 The heather belt and over pasture land
 Came the sweet monotone of one slow bell,
 And parted time into divisions rare,
 Whereof each morsel brought its own delight.

270

‘ They ring for service,’ quoth the fisherman ;
 ‘ Our parson preaches in the church to-night.’

‘ And do the people go ? ’ my brother asked.

‘ Ay, Sir ; they count it mean to stay away,
 He takes it so to heart. He ’s a rare man,
 Our parson ; half a head above us all.’

‘ That ’s a great gift, and notable,’ said I.
 ‘ Ay, Sir ; and when he was a younger man
 He went out in the lifeboat very oft,
 Before the “ Grace of Sunderland ” was wrecked.
 He ’s never been his own man since that hour ;
 For there were thirty men aboard of her,
 Anigh as close as you are now to me,
 And ne’er a one was saved.

280

They’re lying now,
 With two small children, in a row : the church
 And yard are full of seamen’s graves, and few
 Have any names.

She bumped upon the reef ;
 Our parson, my young son, and several more
 Were lashed together with a two-inch rope,
 And crept along to her ; their mates ashore
 Ready to haul them in. The gale was high,
 The sea was all a boiling seething froth,
 And God Almighty’s guns were going off,
 And the land trembled.

290

When she took the ground
 She went to pieces like a lock of hay

Tossed from a pitchfork. Ere it came to that,
The captain reeled on deck with two small things,
One in each arm—his little lad and lass.
Their hair was long, and blew before his face, 300
Or else we thought he had been saved ; he fell,
But held them fast. The crew, poor luckless souls !
The breakers licked them off ; and some were crushed,
Some swallowed in the yeast, some flung up dead,
The dear breath beaten out of them : not one
Jumped from the wreck upon the reef to catch
The hands that strained to reach, but tumbled back
With eyes wide open. But the captain lay
And clung—the only man alive. They prayed—
“ For God’s sake, captain, throw the children here ! ” 310
“ Throw them ! ” our parson cried ; and then she struck :
And he threw one, a pretty two-years child ;
But the gale dashed him on the slippery verge,
And down he went. They say they heard him cry.

‘ Then he rose up and took the other one,
And all our men reached out their hungry arms,
And cried out, “ Throw her, throw her ! ” and he did :
He threw her right against the parson’s breast,
And all at once a sea broke over them,
And they that saw it from the shore have said 320
It struck the wreck and piecemeal scattered it,
Just as a woman might the lump of salt
That ’twixt her hands into the kneading-pan
She breaks and crumbles on her rising bread.

‘ We hauled our men in : two of them were dead—
The sea had beaten them, their heads hung down ;
Our parson’s arms were empty, for the wave
Had torn away the pretty, pretty lamb ;
We often see him stand beside her grave :
But ’twas no fault of his, no fault of his. 330

‘ I ask your pardon, Sirs ; I prate and prate,
And never have I said what brought me here.
Sirs, if you want a boat to-morrow morn,
I’m bold to say there ’s ne’er a boat like mine.’

'Ay, that was what we wanted,' we replied ;
 'A boat, his boat ;' and off he went, well pleased.

We, too, rose up (the crimson in the sky
 Flushing our faces), and went sauntering on,
 And thought to reach our lodging, by the cliff.
 And up and down among the heather beds, 340
 And up and down between the sheaves, we sped,
 Doubling and winding ; for a long ravine
 Ran up into the land and cut us off,
 Pushing out slippery ledges for the birds,
 And rent with many a crevice, where the wind
 Had laid up drifts of empty eggshells, swept
 From the bare berths of gulls and guillemots.

So as it chanced we lighted on a path
 That led into a nutwood ; and our talk
 Was louder than beseemed, if we had known, 350
 With argument and laughter ; for the path,
 As we sped onward, took a sudden turn
 Abrupt, and we came out on churchyard grass,
 And close upon a porch, and face to face
 With those within, and with the thirty graves.
 We heard the voice of one who preached within,
 And stopped. 'Come on,' my brother whispered me ;
 'It were more decent that we enter now ;
 Come on ! we'll hear this rare old demigod :
 I like strong men and large ; I like grey heads, 360
 And grand gruff voices, hoarse though this may be
 With shouting in the storm.'

It was not hoarse,
 The voice that preached to those few fishermen,
 And women, nursing mothers with the babes
 Hushed on their breasts ; and yet it held them not :
 Their drowsy eyes were drawn to look at us,
 Till, having leaned our rods against the wall,
 And left the dogs at watch, we entered, sat,
 And were apprised that, though he saw us not,
 The parson knew that he had lost the eyes 370
 And ears of those before him, for he made
 A pause—a long dead pause—and dropped his arms,
 And stood awaiting, till I felt the red
 Mount to my brow.

And a soft fluttering stir
 Passed over all, and every mother hushed
 The babe beneath her shawl, and he turned round
 And met our eyes, unused to diffidence,
 But diffident of his ; then with a sigh
 Fronted the folk, lifted his grand grey head,
 And said, as one that pondered now the words 380
 He had been preaching on with new surprise,
 And found fresh marvel in their sound, ‘ Behold !
 Behold ! ’ saith He, ‘ I stand at the door and knock.’

Then said the parson : ‘ What ! and shall He wait,
 And must He wait, not only till we say,
 “ Good Lord, the house is clean, the hearth is swept,
 The children sleep, the mackerel-boats are in,
 And all the nets are mended ; therefore I
 Will slowly to the door and open it : ”
 But must He also wait where still, behold ! 390
 He stands and knocks, while we do say, “ Good Lord,
 The gentlefolk are come to worship here,
 And I will up and open to Thee soon ;
 But first I pray a little longer wait,
 For I am taken up with them ; my eyes
 Must needs regard the fashion of their clothes,
 And count the gains I think to make by them ;
 Forsooth, they are of much account, good Lord !
 Therefore have patience with me—wait, dear Lord !
 Or come again ? ”

‘ What ! must He wait for THIS— 400
 For this ? Ay, He doth wait for this, and still,
 Waiting for this, He, patient, railleth not ;
 Waiting for this, e’en this He saith, “ Behold !
 I stand at the door and knock.”

‘ O patient hand !
 Knocking and waiting—knocking in the night
 When work is done ! I charge you, by the sea
 Whereby you fill your children’s mouths, and by
 The might of Him that made it—fishermen !
 I charge you, mothers ! by the mother’s milk
 He drew, and by His Father, God over all, 410
 Blessèd for ever, that ye answer Him !
 Open the door with shame, if ye have sinned ;

If ye be sorry, open it with sighs.
 Albeit the place be bare for poverty,
 And comfortless for lack of plenishing,
 Be not abashed for that, but open it,
 And take Him in that comes to sup with thee ;
 " Behold ! " He saith, " I stand at the door and knock."

' Now, hear me : there be troubles in this world
 That no man can escape, and there is one 420
 That lieth hard and heavy on my soul,
 Concerning that which is to come :—

' I say

As a man that knows what earthly trouble means,
 I will not bear this ONE—I cannot bear
 This ONE—I cannot bear the weight of you—
 You—every one of you, body and soul ;
 You, with the care you suffer, and the loss
 That you sustain ; you, with the growing up
 To peril, maybe with the growing old
 To want, unless before I stand with you 430
 At the great white throne, I may be free of all,
 And utter to the full what shall discharge
 Mine obligation : nay, I will not wait
 A day, for every time the black clouds rise,
 And the gale freshens, still I search my soul
 To find if there be aught that can persuade
 To good, or aught forsooth that can beguile
 From evil, that I (miserable man !
 If that be so) have left unsaid, undone.

' So that when any risen from sunken wrecks, 440
 Or rolled in by the billows to the edge
 Of the everlasting strand, what time the sea
 Gives up her dead, shall meet me, they may say
 Never, " Old man, you told us not of this ;
 You left us fisher-lads that had to toil
 Ever in danger of the secret stab
 Of rocks, far deadlier than the dagger ; winds,
 Of breath more murderous than the cannon's ; waves
 Mighty to rock us to our death ; and gulfs
 Ready beneath to suck and swallow us in : 450
 This crime be on your head ; and as for us—

What shall we do ? ” but rather—nay, not so,
 I will not think it ; I will leave the dead,
 Appealing but to life : I am afraid
 Of you, but not so much if you have sinned
 As for the doubt if sin shall be forgiven.
 The day was, I have been afraid of pride—
 Hard man’s hard pride ; but now I am afraid
 Of man’s humility. I counsel you,
 By the great God’s great humbleness, and by
 His pity, be not humble over-much. 460
 See ! I will show at whose unopened doors
 He stands and knocks, that you may never say,
 “ I am too mean, too ignorant, too lost ;
 He knocks at other doors, but not at mine.”

‘ See here ! it is the night ! it is the night !
 And snow lies thickly, white untrodden snow,
 And the wan moon upon a casement shines—
 A casement crusted o’er with frosty leaves,
 That make her ray less bright along the floor. 470
 A woman sits, with hands upon her knees,
 Poor tired soul ! and she has nought to do,
 For there is neither fire nor candle light :
 The driftwood ash lies cold upon her hearth ;
 The rushlight flickered down an hour ago ;
 Her children wail a little in their sleep
 For cold and hunger, and, as if that sound
 Was not enough, another comes to her,
 Over God’s undefiled snow—a song—
 Nay, never hang your heads—I say, a song. 480

‘ And doth she curse the alehouse, and the sots
 That drink the night out and their earnings there,
 And drink their manly strength and courage down,
 And drink away the little children’s bread,
 And starve her, starving by the self-same act
 Her tender suckling, that with piteous eyes
 Looks in her face, till scarcely she has heart
 To work, and earn the scanty bit and drop
 That feed the others ?

‘ Does she curse the song ?
 I think not, fishermen ; I have not heard 490

Such women curse. God's curse is curse enough.
 To-morrow she will say a bitter thing,
 Pulling her sleeve down lest the bruises show—
 A bitter thing, but meant for an excuse—
 "My master is not worse than many men :"
 But now, ay, now she sitteth dumb and still ;
 No food, no comfort, cold and poverty
 Bearing her down.

‘ My heart is sore for her ;
 How long, how long ? When troubles come of God,
 When men are frozen out of work, when wives 500
 Are sick, when working fathers fail and die,
 When boats go down at sea—then nought behoves
 Like patience ; but for troubles wrought of men
 Patience is hard—I tell you it is hard.

‘ O thou poor soul ! it is the night—the night ;
 Against thy door drifts up the silent snow,
 Blocking thy threshold : “ Fall,” thou sayest, “ fall, fall,
 Cold snow, and lie and be trod underfoot,
 Am not I fallen ? wake up, and pipe, O wind,
 Dull wind, and beat and bluster at my door : 510
 Merciful wind, sing me a hoarse rough song,
 For there is other music made to-night
 That I would fain not hear. Wake, thou still sea,
 Heavily plunge. Shoot on, white waterfall.
 O, I could long like thy cold icicles
 Freeze, freeze, and hang upon the frosty clift
 And not complain, so I might melt at last
 In the warm summer sun, as thou wilt do !

“ But woe is me ! I think there is no sun ;
 My sun is sunken, and the night grows dark : 520
 None care for me. The children cry for bread,
 And I have none, and nought can comfort me ;
 Even if the heavens were free to such as I,
 It were not much, for death is long to wait,
 And heaven is far to go ! ”

‘ And speak'st thou thus,
 Despairing of the sun that sets to thee,
 And of the earthly love that wanes to thee,

And of the heaven that lieth far from thee ?
 Peace, peace, fond fool ! One draweth near thy door
 Whose footsteps leave no print across the snow ; 530
 Thy sun has risen with comfort in his face,
 The smile of heaven, to warm thy frozen heart,
 And bless with saintly hand. What ! is it long
 To wait and far to go ? Thou shalt not go ;
 Behold, across the snow to thee He comes,
 Thy heaven descends, and is it long to wait ?
 Thou shalt not wait : “ This night, this night,” He saith,
 “ I stand at the door and knock.”

‘ It is enough—can such an one be here—
 Yea, here ? O God forgive you, fishermen ! 540
 One ! is there only one ? But do thou know,
 O woman pale for want, if thou art here,
 That on thy lot much thought is spent in heaven ;
 And, coveting the heart a hard man broke,
 One standeth patient, watching in the night,
 And waiting in the day-time.

‘ What shall be
 If thou wilt answer ? He will smile on thee ;
 One smile of His shall be enough to heal
 The wound of man’s neglect ; and He will sigh,
 Pitying the trouble which that sigh shall cure ; 550
 And He will speak—speak in the desolate night,
 In the dark night : “ For me a thorny crown
 Men wove, and nails were driven in my hands
 And feet : there was an earthquake, and I died ;
 I died, and am alive for evermore.

“ I died for thee ; for thee I am alive,
 And my humanity doth mourn for thee,
 For thou art mine ; and all thy little ones,
 They, too, are mine, are mine. Behold, the house 560
 Is dark, but there is brightness where the sons
 Of God are singing, and, behold, the heart
 Is troubled : yet the nations walk in white ;
 They have forgotten how to weep ; and thou
 Shalt also come, and I will foster thee
 And satisfy thy soul ; and thou shalt warm

Thy trembling life beneath the smile of God.
 A little while—it is a little while—
 A little while, and I will comfort thee ;
 I go away, but I will come again.”

‘ But hear me yet. There was a poor old man 570
 Who sat and listened to the raging sea,
 And heard it thunder, lunging at the cliffs
 As like to tear them down. He lay at night ;
 And “ Lord have mercy on the lads,” said he,
 “ That sailed at noon, though they be none of mine !
 For when the gale gets up, and when the wind
 Flings at the window, when it beats the roof,
 And lulls, and stops, and rouses up again,
 And cuts the crest clean off the plunging wave,
 And scatters it like feathers up the field, 580
 Why, then I think of my two lads : my lads
 That would have worked and never let me want,
 And never let me take the parish pay.
 No, none of mine ; my lads were drowned at sea—
 My two—before the most of these were born.
 I know how sharp that cuts, since my poor wife
 Walked up and down, and still walked up and down,
 And I walked after, and one could not hear
 A word the other said, for wind and sea
 That raged and beat and thundered in the night— 590
 The awfulest, the longest, lightest night
 That ever parents had to spend—a moon
 That shone like daylight on the breaking wave.
 Ah me ! and other men have lost their lads,
 And other women wiped their poor dead mouths,
 And got them home and dried them in the house,
 And seen the driftwood lie along the coast,
 That was a tidy boat but one day back,
 And seen next tide the neighbours gather it
 To lay it on their fires.

“ Ay, I was strong 600
 And able-bodied—loved my work ;—but now
 I am a useless hull : ’tis time I sunk ;
 I am in all men’s way ; I trouble them ;
 I am a trouble to myself : but yet
 I feel for mariners of stormy nights,

And feel for wives that watch ashore. Ay, ay !
If I had learning I would pray the Lord
To bring them in : but I'm no scholar, no ;
Book-learning is a world too hard for me :
But I make bold to say, " O Lord, good Lord, 610
I am a broken-down poor man, a fool
To speak to Thee : but in the Book 'tis writ,
As I hear say from others that can read,
How, when Thou camest, Thou didst love the sea,
And live with fisherfolk, whereby 'tis sure
Thou knowest all the peril they go through,
And all their trouble.

“ As for me, good Lord,
I have no boat ; I am too old, too old—
My lads are drowned ; I buried my poor wife ;
My little lasses died so long ago 620
That mostly I forget what they were like.
Thou knowest, Lord ; they were such little ones
I know they went to Thee, but I forget
Their faces, though I missed them sore.

“ O Lord,
I was a strong man ; I have drawn good food
And made good money out of Thy great sea :
But yet I cried for them at nights ; and now,
Although I be so old, I miss my lads,
And there be many folk this stormy night
Heavy with fear for theirs. Merciful Lord, 630
Comfort them ; save their honest boys, their pride,
And let them hear next ebb the blesseddest,
Best sound—the boat keels grating on the sand.

“ I cannot pray with finer words : I know
Nothing ; I have no learning, cannot learn—
Too old, too old. They say I want for nought,
I have the parish pay ; but I am dull
Of hearing, and the fire scarce warms me through.
God save me—I have been a sinful man—
And save the lives of them that still can work, 640
For they are good to me ; ay, good to me.
But, Lord, I am a trouble ! and I sit,
And I am lonesome, and the nights are few
That any think to come and draw a chair,

And sit in my poor place and talk awhile.
 Why should they come, forsooth ? Only the wind
 Knocks at my door, O long and loud it knocks,
 The only thing God made that has a mind
 To enter in."

' Yea, thus the old man spake.

These were the last words of his aged mouth— 650

BUT ONE DID KNOCK. One came to sup with him,
 That humble, weak, old man ; knocked at his door
 In the rough pauses of the labouring wind.

I tell you that One knocked while it was dark,
 Save where their foaming passion had made white
 Those livid seething billows. What He said

In that poor place where He did talk awhile,
 I cannot tell : but this I am assured,

That when the neighbours came the morrow morn,

What time the wind had bated, and the sun 660

Shone on the old man's floor, they saw the smile

He passed away in, and they said, " He looks

As he had woke and seen the face of Christ,

And with that rapturous smile held out his arms

To come to Him ! "

' Can such an one be here,

So old, so weak, so ignorant, so frail ?

The Lord be good to thee, thou poor old man ;

It would be hard with thee if heaven were shut

To such as have not learning ! Nay, nay, nay,

He condescends to them of low estate ; 670

To such as are despised He cometh down,

Stands at the door and knocks.

' Yet bear with me.

I have a message ; I have more to say.

Shall sorrow win His pity, and not sin—

That burden ten times heavier to be borne ?

What think you ? Shall the virtuous have His care

Alone ? O virtuous women, think not scorn,

For you may lift your faces everywhere ;

And now that it grows dusk, and I can see 679

None though they front me straight, I fain would tell

A certain thing to you. I say to *you* ;

And if it doth concern you, as methinks
 It doth, then surely it concerneth all.
 I say that there was once—I say not here—
 I say that there was once a castaway,
 And she was weeping, weeping bitterly ;
 Kneeling, and crying with a heart-sick cry
 That choked itself in sobs—" O my good name !
 O my good name ! " And none did hear her cry !
 Nay ; and it lightened, and the storm-bolts fell, 690
 And the rain splashed upon the roof, and still
 She, storm-tost as the storming elements—
 She cried with an exceeding bitter cry,
 " O my good name ! " And then the thunder-cloud
 Stooped low and burst in darkness overhead,
 And rolled, and rocked her on her knees, and shook
 The frail foundations of her dwelling-place.
 But she—if any neighbour had come in
 (None did) : if any neighbours had come in,
 They might have seen her crying on her knees, 700
 And sobbing " Lost, lost, lost ! " beating her breast—
 Her breast for ever pricked with cruel thorns,
 The wounds whereof could neither balm assuage
 Nor any patience heal—beating her brow,
 Which ached, it had been bent so long to hide
 From level eyes, whose meaning was contempt.

' O ye good women, it is hard to leave
 The paths of virtue, and return again.
 What if this sinner wept, and none of you
 Comforted her ? And what if she did strive, 710
 To mend, and none of you believed her strife,
 Nor looked upon her ? Mark, I do not say,
 Though it was hard, you therefore were to blame :
 That she had aught against you, though your feet
 Never drew near her door. But I beseech
 Your patience. Once in old Jerusalem
 A woman kneeled at consecrated feet,
 Kissed them, and washed them with her tears.

' What then ?

I think that yet our Lord is pitiful :
 I think I see the castaway e'en now ! 720
 And she is not alone : the heavy rain

Splashes without, and sullen thunder rolls,
But she is lying at the sacred feet
Of One transfigured.

‘ And her tears flow down,
Down to her lips—her lips that kiss the print
Of nails ; and love is like to break her heart !
Love and repentance—for it still doth work
Sore in her soul to think, to think that she,
Even she, did pierce the sacred, sacred feet, 729
And bruise the thorn-crowned head.

‘ O Lord, our Lord,
How great is Thy compassion ! Come, good Lord,
For we will open. Come this night, good Lord ;
Stand at the door and knock.

‘ And is this all ?—

Trouble, old age and simpleness, and sin—
This all ? It might be all some other night ;
But this night, if a voice said “ Give account
Whom hast thou with thee ? ” then must I reply,
“ Young manhood have I, beautiful youth and strength,
Rich with all treasure drawn up from the crypt
Where lies the learning of the ancient world— 740
Brave with all thoughts that poets fling upon
The strand of life, as driftweed after storms :
Doubtless familiar with Thy mountain heads,
And the dread purity of Alpine snows,
Doubtless familiar with Thy works concealed
For ages from mankind—outlying worlds,
And many moonèd spheres—and Thy great store
Of stars, more thick than mealy dust which here
Powders the pale leaves of Auriculas.

“ This do I know, but, Lord, I know not more. 750

“ Not more concerning them—concerning Thee,
I know Thy bounty ; where Thou givest much
Standing without, if any call Thee in
Thou givest more.” Speak, then, O rich and strong :
Open, O happy young, ere yet the hand
Of Him that knocks, wearied at last, forbear ;
The patient foot its thankless quest refrain,
The wounded heart for evermore withdraw.’

I have heard many speak, but this one man—
 So anxious not to go to heaven alone— 760
 This one man I remember, and his look,
 Till twilight overshadowed him. He ceased,
 And out in darkness with the fisher folk
 We passed and stumbled over mounds of moss,
 And heard, but did not see, the passing beck.
 Ah, graceless heart, would that it could regain
 From the dim storehouse of sensations past
 The impress full of tender awe, that night,
 Which fell on me ! It was as if the Christ
 Had been drawn down from heaven to track us home,
 And any of the footsteps following us 771
 Might have been His.

A WEDDING SONG

COME up the broad river, the Thames, my Dane,
 My Dane with the beautiful eyes !
 Thousands and thousands await thee full fain,
 And talk of the wind and the skies.
 Fear not from folk and from country to part,
 O, I swear it is wisely done :
 For (I said) I will bear me by thee, sweetheart,
 As becometh my father's son.
 Great London was shouting as I went down.
 ' She is worthy,' I said, ' of this ;
 What shall I give who have promised a crown ?
 O, first I will give her a kiss.'
 So I kissed her and brought her, my Dane, my Dane,
 Through the waving wonderful crowd :
 Thousands and thousands, they shouted amain,
 Like mighty thunders and loud.
 And they said, ' He is young, the lad we love,
 The heir of the Isles is young :
 How we deem of his mother, and one gone above,
 Can neither be said nor sung.
 He brings us a pledge—he will do his part
 With the best of his race and name ; '—
 And I will, for I look to live, sweetheart,
 As may suit with my mother's fame.

THE FOUR BRIDGES

I LOVE this grey old church, the low, long nave,
 The ivied chancel and the slender spire ;
 No less its shadow on each heaving grave,
 With growing osier bound, or living briar ;
 I love those yew-tree trunks, where stand arrayed
 So many deep-cut rames of youth and maid.

A simple custom this—I love it well—
 A carved betrothal and a pledge of truth ;
 How many an eve, their linkèd names to spell,
 Beneath the yew-trees sat our village youth !
 When work was over, and the new-cut hay
 Sent wafts of balm from meadows where it lay.

Ah ! many an eve, while I was yet a boy,
 Some village hind has beckoned me aside,
 And sought mine aid, with shy and awkward joy,
 To carve the letters of his rustic bride,
 And make them clear to read as graven stone,
 Deep in the yew-tree's trunk beside his own.

For none could carve like me, and here they stand,
 Fathers and mothers of this present race ;
 And underscored by some less practised hand,
 That fain the story of its line would trace,
 With children's names, and number, and the day
 When any called to God have passed away.

I look upon them, and I turn aside,
 As oft when carving them I did erewhile,
 And there I see those wooden bridges wide
 That cross the marshy hollow ; there the stile
 In reeds embedded, and the swelling down,
 And the white road towards the distant town.

But those old bridges claim another look.
 Our brattling river tumbles through the one ;
 The second spans a shallow, weedy brook ;
 Beneath the others, and beneath the sun,
 Lie two long stilly pools, and on their breasts
 Picture their wooden piles, encased in swallows' nests.

And round about them grows a fringe of reeds,
And then a floating crown of lily flowers,
And yet within small silver-budded weeds ;
But each clear centre evermore embowers
A deeper sky, where, stooping, you may see
The little minnows darting restlessly.

My heart is bitter, lilies, at your sweet ;
Why did the dewdrop fringe your chalices ?
Why in your beauty are you thus complete,
You silver ships—you floating palaces ?
O ! if need be, you must allure man's eye,
Yet wherefore blossom here ? O why ? O why ?

O ! O ! the world is wide, you lily flowers,
It hath warm forests, cleft by stilly pools,
Where every night bathe crowds of stars ; and bowers
Of spicery hang over. Sweet air cools
And shakes the lilies among those stars that lie :
Why are not ye content to reign there ? Why ?

That chain of bridges, it were hard to tell
How it is linked with all my early joy.
There was a little foot that I loved well,
It danced across them when I was a boy ;
There was a careless voice that used to sing ;
There was a child, a sweet and happy thing.

Oft through that matted wood of oak and birch
She came from yonder house upon the hill ;
She crossed the wooden bridges to the church,
And watched, with village girls, my boasted skill :
But loved to watch the floating lilies best,
Or linger, peering in a swallow's nest ;

Linger and linger, with her wistful eyes
Drawn to the lily-buds that lay so white
And soft on crimson water ; for the skies
Would crimson, and the little clouldlets bright
Would all be flung among the flowers sheer down,
To flush the spaces of their clustering crown.

Till the green rushes—O, so glossy green—

The rushes, they would whisper, rustle, shake ;
And forth on floating gauze, no jewelled queen
So rich, the green-eyed dragon-flies would break,
And hover on the flowers—aërial things,
With little rainbows flickering on their wings.

Ah ! my heart dear ! the polished pools lie still,
Like lanes of water reddened by the west,
Till, swooping down from yon o'erhanging hill,
The bold marsh harrier wets her tawny breast ;
We scared her oft in childhood from her prey,
And the old eager thoughts rise fresh as yesterday.

To yonder copse by moonlight I did go,
In luxury of mischief, half afraid,
To steal the great owl's brood, her downy snow,
Her screaming imps to seize, the while she preyed
With yellow, cruel eyes, whose radiant glare,
Fell with their mother rage, I might not dare.

Panting I lay till her great fanning wings
Troubled the dreams of rock-doves, slumbering nigh,
And she and her fierce mate, like evil things,
Skimmed the dusk fields ; then rising, with a cry
Of fear, joy, triumph, darted on my prey,
And tore it from the nest and fled away.

But afterward, belated in the wood,
I saw her moping on the rifled tree,
And my heart smote me for her, while I stood
Awakened from my careless reverie ;
So white she looked, with moonlight round her shed,
So motherlike she drooped and hung her head.

O that mine eyes would cheat me ! I behold
The godwits running by the water edge,
The mossy bridges mirrored as of old ;
The little curlews creeping from the sedge,
But not the little foot so gaily light :
O that mine eyes would cheat me, that I might !—

Would cheat me ! I behold the gable ends—

Those purple pigeons clustering on the cote,
The lane with maples overhung, that bends

Toward her dwelling ; the dry grassy moat,
Thick mullions, diamond latticed, mossed and grey,
And walls banked up with laurel and with bay.

And up behind them yellow fields of corn,

And still ascending countless firry spires,
Dry slopes of hills uncultured, bare, forlorn,

And green in rocky clefts with whins and briars ;
Then rich cloud masses dyed the violet's hue,
With orange sunbeams dropping swiftly through.

Ay, I behold all this full easily ;

My soul is jealous of my happier eyes,
And manhood envies youth. Ah, strange to see,

By looking merely, orange-flooded skies ;
Nay, any dew-drop that may near me shine :
But never more the face of *Eglantine* !

She was my one companion, being herself

The jewel and adornment of my days,

My life's completeness. O, a smiling elf,

That I do but disparage with my praise—
My playmate ; and I loved her dearly and long,
And she loved me, as the tender love the strong.

Ay, but she grew, till on a time there came

A sudden restless yearning to my heart ;

And as we went a-nesting, all for shame

And shyness, I did hold my peace, and start ;
Content departed, comfort shut me out,
And there was nothing left to talk about.

She had but sixteen years, and as for me,

Four added made my life. This pretty bird,

This fairy bird that I had cherished—she,

Content, had sung, while I, contented, heard.
The song had ceased ; the bird, with nature's art,
Had brought a thorn and set it in my heart.

The restless birth of love my soul oppress,
I longed and wrestled for a tranquil day,
And warred with that disquiet in my breast
As one who knows there is a better way ;
But, turned against myself, I still in vain
Looked for the ancient calm to come again.

My tired soul could to itself confess
That she deserved a wiser love than mine,
To love more truly were to love her less,
And for this truth I still awoke to pine ;
I had a dim belief that it would be
A better thing for her, a blessed thing for me.

Good hast Thou made them—comforters right sweet ;
Good hast Thou made the world, to mankind lent ;
Good are Thy dropping clouds that feed the wheat ;
Good are Thy stars above the firmament.
Take to Thee, take, Thy worship, Thy renown ;
The good which Thou hast made doth wear Thy crown.

For, O my God, Thy creatures are so frail,
Thy bountiful creation is so fair,
That, drawn before us like the temple veil,
It hides the Holy Place from thought and care,
Giving man's eyes instead its sweeping fold,
Rich as with cherub wings and apples wrought of gold,

Purple and blue and scarlet—shimmering bells
And rare pomegranates on its brodered rim,
Glorious with chain- and fret-work that the swell
Of incense shakes to music dreamy and dim,
Till on a day comes loss, that God makes gain,
And death and darkness rend the veil in twain.

* * * * *

Ah, sweetest ! my beloved ! each outward thing
Recalls my youth, and is instinct with thee ;
Brown wood-owls in the dusk, with noiseless wing,
Float from yon hanger to their haunted tree,
And hoot full softly. Listening, I regain
A flashing thought of thee with their remembered strain

I will not pine—it is the careless brook,
These amber sunbeams slanting down the vale ;
It is the long tree-shadows, with their look
Of natural peace, that make my heart to fail :
The peace of nature—No, I will not pine—
But O the contrast 'twixt her face and mine !

And still I changed—I was a boy no more ;
My heart was large enough to hold my kind,
And all the world. As hath been oft before
With youth, I sought, but I could never find
Work hard enough to quiet my self-strife,
And use the strength of action-craving life.

She, too, was changed : her bountiful sweet eyes
Looked out full lovingly on all the world.
O tender as the deeps in yonder skies
Their beaming ! but her rosebud lips were curled
With the soft dimple of a musing smile,
Which kept my gaze, but held me mute the while.

A cast of bees, a slowly moving wain,
The scent of bean-flowers wafted up a dell,
Blue pigeons wheeling over fields of grain,
Or bleat of folded lamb, would please her well ;
Or cooing of the early coted dove ;—
She sauntering mused of these ; I, following, mused of
love.

With her two lips, that one the other pressed
So poutingly with such a tranquil air,
With her two eyes, that on my own would rest
So dream-like, she denied my silent prayer,
Fronted unuttered words and said them nay,
And smiled down love till it had nought to say.

The words that through mine eyes would clearly shine
Hovered and hovered on my lips in vain ;
If after pause I said but ' Eglantine ',
She raised to me her quiet eyelids twain,
And looked me this reply—look calm, yet bland—
' I shall not know, I will not understand.'

Yet she did know my story—knew my life
Was wrought to hers with bindings many and strong :
That I, like Israel, servèd for a wife,
And for the love I bare her thought not long,
But only a few days, full quickly told,
My seven years' service strict as his of old.

I must be brief : the twilight shadows grow,
And steal the rose-bloom genial summer sheds,
And scented wafts of wind that come and go
Have lifted dew from honied clover-heads ;
The seven stars shine out above the mill,
The dark delightsome woods lie veiled and still.

Hush ! hush ! the nightingale begins to sing,
And stops, as ill-contented with her note ;
Then breaks from out the bush with hurried wing,
Restless and passionate. She tunes her throat,
Laments awhile in wavering trills, and then
Floods with a stream of sweetness all the glen.

The seven stars upon the nearest pool
Lie trembling down betwixt the lily leaves,
And move like glowworms ; wafting breezes cool
Come down along the water, and it heaves
And bubbles in the sedge ; while deep and wide
The dim night settles on the country side.

I know this scene by heart. O ! once before
I saw the seven stars float to and fro,
And stayed my hurried footsteps by the shore
To mark the starry picture spread below :
Its silence made the tumult in my breast
More audible ; its peace revealed my own unrest.

I paused, then hurried on ; my heart beat quick ;
I crossed the bridges, reached the steep ascent,
And climbed through matted fern and hazels thick ;
Then darkling through the close green maples went,
And saw—there felt love's keenest pangs begin—
An oriel window lighted from within—

I saw—and felt that they were scarcely cares
Which I had known before ; I drew more near,
And O ! methought how sore it frets and wears
The soul to part with that it holds so dear ;
'Tis hard two woven tendrils to untwine,
And I was come to part with Eglantine.

For life was bitter through those words repressed,
And youth was burdened with unspoken vows ;
Love unrequited brooded in my breast,
And shrank, at glance, from the belovèd brows :
And three long months, heart-sick, my foot withdrawn,
I had not sought her side by rivulet, copse, or lawn—

Not sought her side, yet busy thought no less
Still followed in her wake, though far behind ;
And I, being parted from her loveliness,
Looked at the picture of her in my mind :
I lived alone, I walked with soul opprest,
And ever sighed for her, and sighed for rest.

Then I had risen to struggle with my heart,
And said—' O heart ! the world is fresh and fair,
And I am young ; but this thy restless smart
Changes to bitterness the morning air :
I will, I must, these weary fetters break—
I will be free, if only for her sake.

' O let me trouble her no more with sighs !
Heart-healing comes by distance, and with time :
Then let me wander, and enrich mine eyes
With the green forests of a softer clime,
Or list by night at sea the wind's low stave
And long monotonous rockings of the wave.

' Through open solitudes, unbounded meads.
Where, wading on breast-high in yellow bloom,
Untamed of man, the shy white llama feeds—
There would I journey and forget my doom ;
Or far, O far as sunrise I would see
The level prairie stretch away from me !

' Or I would sail upon the tropic seas,
Where fathom long the blood-red dulse grow,
Droop from the rock and waver in the breeze,
Lashing the tide to foam ; while calm below
The muddy mandrakes throng those waters warm,
And purple, gold, and green, the living blossoms swarm.

So of my father I did win consent,
With importunities repeated long,
To make that duty which had been my bent,
To dig with strangers alien tombs among,
And bound to them through desert leagues to pace,
Or track up rivers to their starting-place.

For this I had done battle and had won,
But not alone to tread Arabian sands,
Measure the shadows of a southern sun,
Or dig out gods in the old Egyptian lands ;
But for the dream wherewith I thought to cope—
The grief of love unmated with love's hope.

And now I would set reason in array,
Methought, and fight for freedom manfully,
Till by long absence there would come a day
When this my love would not be pain to me ;
But if I knew my rosebud fair and blest
I should not pine to wear it on my breast.

The days fled on ; another week should fling
A foreign shadow on my lengthening way ;
Another week, yet nearness did not bring
A braver heart that hard farewell to say.
I let the last day wane the dusk begin,
Ere I had sought that window lighted from within.

Sinking and sinking, O my heart ! my heart !
Will absence heal thee whom its shade doth rend ?
I reached the little gate, and soft within
The oriel fell her shadow. She did lend
Her loveliness to me, and let me share
The listless sweetness of those features fair.

Among thick laurels in the gathering gloom,
Heavy for this our parting, I did stand ;
Beside her mother in the lighted room,
She sitting leaned her cheek upon her hand ;
And as she read, her sweet voice floating through
The open casement seemed to mourn me an adieu.

Youth ! youth ! how buoyant are thy hopes ! they turn,
Like marigolds, toward the sunny side.
My hopes were buried in a funeral urn,
And they sprung up like plants and spread them wide ;
Though I had schooled and reasoned them away,
They gathered smiling near and prayed a holiday.

Ah, sweetest voice ! how pensive were its tones,
And how regretful its unconscious pause !
' Is it for me her heart this sadness owns,
And is our parting of to-night the cause ?
Ah, would it might be so ! ' I thought, and stood
Listening entranced among the underwood.

I thought it would be something worth the pain
Of parting, to look once in those deep eyes,
And take from them an answering look again :
' When eastern palms ', I thought, ' about me rise,
If I might carve our names upon the rind,
Betrothed, I would not mourn, though leaving thee
behind.'

I can be patient, faithful, and most fond
To unacknowledged love ; I can be true
To this sweet thralldom, this unequal bond,
This yoke of mine that reaches not to you :
O, how much more could costly parting buy—
If not a pledge, one kiss, or, failing that, a sigh !.

I listened, and she ceased to read ; she turned
Her face toward the laurels where I stood :
Her mother spoke—O wonder ! hardly learned ;
She said, ' There is a rustling in the wood ;
Ah, child ! if one draw near to bid farewell,
Let not thine eyes an unsought secret tell.

‘ My daughter, there is nothing held so dear
As love, if only it be hard to win.
The roses that in yonder hedge appear
Outdo our garden-buds which bloom within ;
But since the hand may pluck them every day,
Unmarked they bud, bloom, drop, and drift away.

‘ My daughter, my belovèd, be not you
Like those same roses.’ O bewildering word !
My heart stood still, a mist obscured my view :
It cleared ; still silence. No denial stirred
The lips beloved ; but straight, as one opprest,
She, kneeling, dropped her face upon her mother’s breast.

This said, ‘ My daughter, sorrow comes to all ;
Our life is checked with shadows manifold :
But woman has this more—she may not call
Her sorrow by its name. Yet love not told,
And only born of absence and by thought,
With thought and absence may return to nought.’

And my belovèd lifted up her face,
And moved her lips as if about to speak ;
She dropped her lashes with a girlish grace,
And the rich damask mantled in her cheek :
I stood awaiting till she should deny
Her love, or with sweet laughter put it by.

But, closer nestling to her mother’s heart,
She, blushing, said no word to break my trance,
For I was breathless ; and, with lips apart,
Felt my breast pant and all my pulses dance,
And strove to move, but could not for the weight
Of unbelieving joy, so sudden and so great,

Because she loved me. With a mighty sigh
Breaking away, I left her on her knees,
And blest the laurel bower, the darkened sky,
The sultry night of August. Through the trees,
Giddy with gladness, to the porch I went,
And hardly found the way for joyful wonderment.

Yet, when I entered, saw her mother sit
With both hands cherishing the graceful head,
Smoothing the clustered hair, and parting it
From the fair brow ; she, rising, only said,
In the accustomed tone, the accustomed word,
The careless greeting that I always heard ;

And she resumed her merry, mocking smile,
Though tear-drops on the glistening lashes hung.
O woman ! thou wert fashioned to beguile :
So have all sages said, all poets sung.
She spoke of favouring winds and waiting ships,
With smiles of gratulation on her lips !

And then she looked and faltered : I had grown
So suddenly in life and soul a man :
She moved her lips, but could not find a tone
To set her mocking music to ; began
One struggle for dominion, raised her eyes,
And straight withdrew them, bashful through surprise.

The colour over cheek and bosom flushed ;
I might have heard the beating of her heart,
But that mine own beat louder ; when she blushed,
The hand within mine own I felt to start,
But would not change my pitiless decree
To strive with her for might and mastery.

She looked again, as one that, half afraid,
Would fain be certain of a doubtful thing ;
Or one beseeching ' Do not me upbraid ! '
And then she trembled like the fluttering
Of timid little birds, and silent stood,
No smile wherewith to mock my hardihood.

She turned, and to an open casement moved
With girlish shyness, mute beneath my gaze,
And I on downcast lashes unreprieved
Could look as long as pleased me ; while, the rays
Of moonlight round her, she her fair head bent,
In modest silence to my words attent.

How fast the giddy whirling moments flew !

The moon had set ; I heard the midnight chime ;
Hope is more brave than fear, and joy than dread,

And I could wait unmoved the parting time.

It came ; for by a sudden impulse drawn,
She, risen, stepped out upon the dusky lawn.

A little waxen taper in her hand,

Her feet upon the dry and dewless grass,
She looked like one of the celestial band,

Only that on her cheeks did dawn and pass
Most human blushes ; while, the soft light thrown
On vesture pure and white, she seemed yet fairer grown.

Her mother, looking out toward her, sighed,

Then gave her hand in token of farewell,
And with her warning eyes, that seemed to chide,

Scarce suffered that I sought her child to tell
The story of my life, whose every line
No other burden bore than—Eglantine.

Black thunder-clouds were rising up behind,

The waxen taper burned full steadily ;
It seemed as if dark midnight had a mind

To hear what lovers say, and her decree
Had passed for silence, while she, dropped to ground
With raiment floating wide, drank in the sound.

O happiness ! thou dost not leave a trace

So well defined as sorrow. Amber light,
Shed like a glory on her angel face,

I can remember fully, and the sight
Of her fair forehead and her shining eyes,
And lips that smiled in sweet and girlish wise.

I can remember how the taper played

Over her small hands and her vesture white ;
How it struck up into the trees, and laid

Upon their under leaves unwonted light ;
And when she held it low, how far it spread
O'er velvet pansies slumbering on their bed.

I can remember that we spoke full low,
That neither doubted of the other's truth ;
And that with footsteps slower and more slow,
Hands folded close for love, eyes wet for ruth :
Beneath the trees, by that clear taper's flame,
We wandered till the gate of parting came.

But I forget the parting words she said,
So much they thrilled the all-attentive soul ;
For one short moment human heart and head
May bear such bliss—its present is the whole :
I had that present, till in whispers fell
With parting gesture her subdued farewell.

Farewell ! she said, in act to turn away,
But stood a moment still to dry her tears,
And suffered my enfolding arm to stay
The time of her departure. O ye years
That intervene betwixt that day and this !
You all received your hue from that keen pain and bliss.

O mingled pain and bliss ! O pain to break
At once from happiness so lately found,
And four long years to feel for her sweet sake
The incompleteness of all sight and sound !
But bliss to cross once more the foaming brine—
O bliss to come again and make her mine !

I cannot—O, I cannot more recall !
But I will soothe my troubled thoughts to rest
With musing over journeyings wide, and all
Observance of this active-humoured west,
And swarming cities steeped in eastern day,
With swarthy tribes in gold and striped array.

I turn from these, and straight there will succeed
(Shifting and changing at the restless will),
Imbedded in some deep Circassian mead,
White wagon-tilts, and flocks that eat their fill
Unseen above, while comely shepherds pass,
And scarcely show their heads above the grass.

—The red Sahara in an angry glow,
With amber fogs, across its hollows trailed
Long strings of camels, gloomy-eyed and slow,
And women on their necks, from gazers veiled,
And sun-swart guides who toil across the sand
To groves of date-trees on the watered land.

Again—the brown sails of an Arab boat,
Flapping by night upon a glassy sea,
Whereon the moon and planets seem to float,
More bright of hue than they were wont to be,
While shooting-stars rain down with crackling sound,
And, thick as swarming locusts, drop to ground.

Or far into the heat among the sands
The gembok nations, snuffing up the wind,
Drawn by the scent of water—and the bands
Of tawny-bearded lions pacing, blind
With the sun-dazzle in their midst, opprest
With prey, and spiritless for lack of rest !

What more ? Old Lebanon, the frosty-browed,
Setting his feet among oil-olive trees,
Heaving his bare brown shoulder through a cloud ;
And after, grassy Carmel, purple seas,
Flattering his dreams and echoing in his rocks,
Soft as the bleating of his thousand flocks.

Enough : how vain this thinking to beguile,
With recollected scenes, an aching breast !
Did not I, journeying, muse on her the while ?
Ah, yes ! for every landscape comes impressed—
Ay, written on, as by an iron pen—
With the same thought I nursed about her then

Therefore let memory turn again to home ;
Feel, as of old, the joy of drawing near ;
Watch the green breakers and the wind-tossed foam,
And see the land-fog break, dissolve, and clear ;
Then think a skylark's voice far sweeter sound
Than ever thrilled but over English ground ;

And walk, glad, even to tears, among the wheat,
Not doubting this to be the first of lands ;
And, while in foreign words this murmuring, meet
Some little village schoolgirls (with their hands
Full of forget-me-nots), who greeting me,
I count their English talk delightful melody ;

And seat me on a bank, and draw them near
That I may feast myself with hearing it,
Till shortly they forget their bashful fear,
Push back their flaxen curls, and round me sit—
Tell me their names, their daily tasks, and show
Where wild wood strawberries in the copses grow.

So passed the day in this delightful land :
My heart was thankful for the English tongue—
For English sky with feathery cloudlets spanned—
For English hedge with glistening dewdrops hung.
I journeyed, and at glowing eventide
Stopped at a rustic inn by the wayside.

That night I slumbered sweetly, being right glad
To miss the flapping of the shrouds ; but lo !
A quiet dream of beings twain I had,
Behind the curtain talking soft and low :
Methought I did not heed their utterance fine,
Till one of them said softly, ‘ Eglantine.’

I started up awake, ’twas silence all :
My own fond heart had shaped that utterance clear ;
And ‘ Ah ! ’ methought, ‘ how sweetly did it fall,
Though but in dream, upon the listening ear !
How sweet from other lips the name well known—
That name, so many a year heard only from mine own ! ’

I thought awhile, then slumber came to me,
And tangled all my fancy in her maze,
And I was drifting on a raft at sea,
The near all ocean, and the far all haze ;
Through the white polished water sharks did glide,
And up in heaven I saw no stars to guide.

‘ Have mercy, God ! ’ but lo ! my raft uprose ,
Drip, drip, I heard the water splash from it ;
My raft had wings, and as the petrel goes,
It skimmed the sea, then brooding seemed to sit
The milk-white mirror, till, with sudden spring,
It flew straight upward like a living thing.

But strange !—I went not also in that flight,
For I was entering at a cavern’s mouth ;
Trees grew within, and screaming birds of night
Sat on them, hiding from the torrid south.
On, on I went, while gleaming in the dark
Those trees with blanchèd leaves stood pale and stark.

The trees had flower-buds, nourished in deep night,
And suddenly, as I went farther in,
They opened, and they shot out lambent light ;
Then all at once arose a railing din
That frightened me : ‘ It is the ghosts,’ I said,
‘ And they are railing for their darkness fled.

‘ I hope they will not look me in the face ;
It frighteth me to hear their laughter loud ; ’
I saw them troop before with jaunty pace,
And one would shake off dust that soiled her shroud :
But now, O joy unhopèd ! to calm my dread,
Some moonlight filterèd through a cleft o’erhead.

I climbed the lofty trees—the blanchèd trees—
The cleft was wide enough to let me through ;
I clambered out and felt the balmy breeze,
And stepped on churchyard grasses wet with dew.
O happy chance ! O fortune to admire !
I stood beside my own loved village spire.

And as I gazed upon the yew-tree’s trunk,
Lo, far off music—music in the night !
So sweet and tender as it swelled and sunk ;
It charmed me till I wept with keen delight,
And in my dream, methought as it drew near
The very clouds in heaven stooped low to hear.

Beat high; beat low, wild heart so deeply stirred,
For high as heaven runs up the piercing strain;
The restless music fluttering like a bird
Bemoaned herself, and dropped to earth again,
Heaping up sweetness till I was afraid
That I should die of grief when it did fade.

And it DID fade; but while with eager ear
I drank its last long echo dying away,
I was aware of footsteps that drew near,
And round the ivied chancel seemed to stray:
O soft above the hallowed place they trod—
Soft as the fall of foot that is not shod!

I turned—'twas even so—yes, Eglantine!
For at the first I had divined the same;
I saw the moon on her shut eyelids shine,
And said 'She is asleep': still on she came;
Then, on her dimpled feet, I saw it gleam,
And thought—'I know that this is but a dream.'

My darling! O my darling! not the less
My dream went on because I knew it such;
She came towards me in her loveliness—
A thing too pure, methought, for mortal touch;
The rippling gold did on her bosom meet,
The long white robe descended to her feet.

The fringed lids dropped low, as sleep-oppressed;
Her dreamy smile was very fair to see,
And her two hands were folded to her breast,
With somewhat held between them heedfully.
O fast asleep! and yet methought she knew
And felt my nearness those shut eyelids through.

She sighed: my tears ran down for tenderness—
'And have I drawn thee to me in my sleep?
Is it for me thou wanderest shelterless,
Wetting thy steps in dewy grasses deep?
O if this be!' I said—'yet speak to me;
I blame my very dream for cruelty.'

Then from her stainless bosom she did take
Two beauteous lily flowers that lay therein,
And with slow-moving lips a gesture make,
As one that some forgotten words doth win :
' They floated on the pool,' methought she said,
And water trickled from each lily's head.

It dropped upon her feet—I saw it gleam
Along the ripples of her yellow hair,
And stood apart, for only in a dream
She would have come, methought, to meet me there.
She spoke again—' Ah fair ! ah fresh they shine !
And there are many left, and these are mine.'

I answered her with flattering accents meet—
' Love, they are whitest lilies e'er were blown.'
' And sayest thou so ? ' she sighed in murmurs sweet ;
' I have nought else to give thee now, mine own !
For it is night. Then take them, love ! ' said she :
' They have been costly flowers to thee—and me.'

While thus she said I took them from her hand,
And, overcome with love and nearness, woke ;
And overcome with ruth that she should stand
Barefooted on the grass ; that, when she spoke,
Her mystic words should take so sweet a tone,
And of all names her lips should choose ' My own '.

I rose, I journeyed, neared my home, and soon
Beheld the spire peer out above the hill :
It was a sunny harvest afternoon,
When by the churchyard wicket, standing still,
I cast my eager eyes abroad to know
If change had touched the scenes of long ago.

I looked across the hollow ; sunbeams shone
Upon the old house with the gable ends :
' Save that the laurel-trees are taller grown,
No change', methought, ' to its grey wall extends.
What clear bright beams on yonder lattice shine !
There did I sometime talk with Eglantine.'

There standing with my very goal in sight,
Over my haste did sudden quiet steal ;
I thought to dally with my own delight,
Nor rush on headlong to my garnered weal,
But taste the sweetness of a short delay,
And for a little moment hold the bliss at bay.

The church was open ; it perchance might be
That there to offer thanks I might essay,
Or rather, as I think, that I might see
The place where Eglantine was wont to pray.
But so it was ; I crossed that portal wide,
And felt my riot joy to calm subside.

The low depending curtains, gently swayed,
Cast over arch and roof a crimson glow ;
But, ne'ertheless, all silence and all shade
It seemed, save only for the rippling flow
Of their long foldings, when the sunset air
Sighed through the casements of the house of prayer.

I found her place, the ancient oaken stall,
Where in her childhood I had seen her sit,
Most saint-like and most tranquil there of all,
Folding her hands, as if a dreaming fit—
A heavenly vision had before her strayed
Of the Eternal Child in lowly manger laid.

I saw her prayer-book laid upon the seat,
And took it in my hand, and felt more near
In fancy to her, finding it most sweet
To think how very oft, low kneeling there,
In her devout thoughts she had let me share,
And set my graceless name in her pure prayer.

My eyes were dazzled with delightful tears—
In sooth they were the last I ever shed ;
For with them fell the cherished dreams of years.
I looked, and on the wall above my head,
Over her seat, there was a tablet placed,
With one word only on the marble traced.—

Ah, well ! I would not overstate that woe,
For I have had some blessings, little care ;
But since the falling of that heavy blow,
God's earth has never seemed to me so fair ;
Nor any of His creatures so divine,
Nor sleep so sweet ;—the word was—EGLANTINE.

A MOTHER SHOWING THE PORTRAIT OF HER CHILD

(F. M. L.)

LIVING child or pictured cherub
Ne'er o'ermatched its baby grace ;
And the mother, moving nearer,
Looked it calmly in the face ;
Then with slight and quiet gesture,
And with lips that scarcely smiled,
Said—' A Portrait of my daughter
When she was a child.'

Easy thought was hers to fathom,
Nothing hard her glance to read,
For it seemed to say, ' No praises
For this little child I need :
If you see, I see far better,
And I will not feign to care
For a stranger's prompt assurance
That the face is fair.'

Softly clasped and half extended,
She her dimpled hands doth lay :
So they doubtless placed them, saying—
' Little one, you must not play.'
And while yet his work was growing,
This the painter's hand hath shown,
That the little heart was making
Pictures of its own.

Is it warm in that green valley,
Vale of childhood, where you dwell ?
Is it calm in that green valley,
Round whose bournes such great hills swell ?
Are there giants in the valley—
Giants leaving footprints yet ?
Are there angels in the valley ?
Tell me—I forget.

Answer, answer, for the lilies,
Little one, o’ertop you much,
And the mealy gold within them
You can scarcely reach to touch ;
O how far their aspect differs,
Looking up and looking down !
You look up in that green valley—
Valley of renown.

Are there voices in the valley,
Lying near the heavenly gate ?
When it opens, do the harp-strings,
Touched within, reverberate ?
When, like shooting-stars, the angels
To your couch at nightfall go,
Are their swift wings heard to rustle ?
Tell me ! for you know.

Yes, you know ; and you are silent,
Not a word shall asking win ;
Little mouth more sweet than rosebud,
Fast it locks the secret in.
Not a glimpse upon your present
You unfold to glad my view ;
Ah, what secrets of your future
I could tell to you !

Sunny present ! thus I read it,
By remembrance of my past :—
Its to-day and its to-morrow
Are as lifetimes vague and vast ;
And each face in that green valley
Takes for you an aspect mild,
And each voice grows soft in saying—
‘ Kiss me, little child ! ’

As a boon the kiss is granted :
 Baby mouth, your touch is sweet,
Takes the love without the trouble
 From those lips that with it meet ;
Gives the love, O pure ! O tender !
 Of the valley where it grows,
But the baby heart receiveth
 MORE THAN IT BESTOWS.

Comes the future to the present—
 ‘ Ah ! ’ she saith, ‘ too blithe of mood ;
Why that smile which seems to whisper—
 “ I am happy, God is good ” ?
God is good : that truth eternal
 Sown for you in happier years,
I must tend it in my shadow,
 Water it with tears.

‘ Ah, sweet present ! I must lead thee
 By a daylight more subdued ;
There must teach thee low to whisper—
 “ I am mournful, God is good ! ” ’
Peace, thou future ! clouds are coming,
 Stooping from the mountain crest,
But that sunshine floods the valley ;
 Let her—let her rest.

Comes the future to the present—
 ‘ Child,’ she saith, ‘ and wilt thou rest ?
How long, child, before thy footsteps
 Fret to reach yon cloudy crest ?
Ah, the valley !—angels guard it,
 But the heights are brave to see ;
Looking down were long contentment :
 Come up, child, to me.’

So she speaks, but do not heed her,
 Little maid with wondrous eyes,
Not afraid, but clear and tender,
 Blue, and filled with prophecies ;
Thou for whom life’s veil unlifted
 Hangs, whom warmest valleys fold,
Lift the veil, the charm dissolveth—
 Climb, but heights are cold.

There are buds that fold within them,
Closed and covered from our sight,
Many a richly-tinted petal,
Never looked on by the light :
Fain to see their shrouded faces,
Sun and dew are long at strife,
Till at length the sweet buds open—
Such a bud is life.

When the rose of thine own being
Shall reveal its central fold,
Thou shalt look within and marvel,
Fearing what thine eyes behold ;
What it shows and what it teaches
Are not things wherewith to part ;
Thorny rose ! that always costeth
Beatings at the heart.

Look in fear, for there is dimness,
Ills unshapen float anigh.
Look in awe : for this same nature
Once the Godhead deigned to die.
Look in love, for He doth love it,
And its tale is best of lore :
Still humanity grows dearer,
Being learned the more.

Learn, but not the less bethink thee
How that all can mingle tears ;
But his joy can none discover,
Save to them that are his peers ;
And that they whose lips do utter
Language such as bards have sung—
Lo ! their speech shall be to many
As an unknown tongue.

Learn, that if to thee the meaning
Of all other eyes be shown,
Fewer eyes can ever front thee
That are skilled to read thine own ;
And that if thy love's deep current
Many another's far outflows,
Then thy heart must take for ever
LESS THAN IT BESTOWS.

STRIFE AND PEACE

(Written for THE PORTFOLIO SOCIETY, October 1861)

THE yellow poplar leaves came down
 And like a carpet lay,
 No waftings were in the sunny air
 To flutter them away ;
 And he stepped on blithe and debonair
 That warm October day.

‘ The boy,’ saith he, ‘ hath got his own,
 But sore has been the fight,
 For ere his life began the strife
 That ceased but yesternight ;
 For the will,’ he said, ‘ the kinsfolk read,
 And read it not aright.

‘ His cause was argued in the court
 Before his christening day,
 And counsel was heard, and judge demurred,
 And bitter waxed the fray ;
 Brother with brother spake no word
 When they met in the way.

‘ Against each one did each contend,
 And all against the heir.
 I would not bend, for I knew the end—
 I have it for my share,
 And nought repent, though my first friend
 From henceforth I must spare.

‘ Manor and moor and farm and wold
 Their greed begrudged him sore,
 And parchments old with passionate hold
 They guarded heretofore ;
 And they carped at signature and seal,
 But they may carp no more.

‘ An old affront will stir the heart
 Through years of rankling pain,
 And I feel the fret that urged me yet
 That warfare to maintain ;
 For an enemy’s loss may well be set
 Above an infant’s gain.

‘ An enemy’s loss I go to prove ;
Laugh out, thou little heir !
Laugh in his face who vowed to chase
Thee from thy birthright fair ;
For I come to set thee in thy place :
Laugh out, and do not spare.’

A man of strife, in wrathful mood
He neared the nurse’s door ;
With poplar leaves the roof and eaves
Were thickly scattered o’er,
And yellow as they a sunbeam lay
Along the cottage floor.

‘ Sleep on, thou pretty, pretty lamb,’
He hears the fond nurse say ;
‘ And if angels stand at thy right hand,
As now belike they may,
And if angels meet at thy bed’s feet,
I fear them not this day.

‘ Come wealth, come want to thee, dear heart
It was all one to me,
For thy pretty tongue far sweeter rung
Than coined gold and fee ;
And ever the while thy waking smile
It was right fair to see.

‘ Sleep, pretty bairn, and never know
Who grudged and who transgressed ;
Thee to retain I was full fain,
But God, He knoweth best !
And His peace upon thy brow lies plain
As the sunshine on thy breast !’

The man of strife, he enters in,
Looks, and his pride doth cease ;
Anger and sorrow shall be to-morrow
Trouble, and no release ;
But the babe whose life awoke the strife
Hath entered into peace.

A STORY OF DOOM

AND OTHER POEMS

(1867)

THE DREAMS THAT CAME TRUE

I SAW in a vision once, our mother-sphere
The world, her fixed foredoomed oval tracing,
Rolling and rolling on and resting never,
While like a phantom fell, behind her pacing
The unfurled flag of night, her shadow drear
Fled as she fled and hung to her for ever.

Great Heaven ! methought, how strange a doom to share.
Would I may never bear
Inevitable darkness after me
(Darkness endow'd with drawings strong,
And shadowy hands that cling unendingly),
Nor feel that phantom-wings behind me sweep,
As she feels night pursuing through the long
Illimitable reaches of ' the vasty deep '.

God save you, gentlefolks. There was a man
Who lay awake at midnight on his bed,
Watching the spiral flame that feeding ran
Among the logs upon his hearth, and shed
A comfortable glow both warm and dim
On crimson curtains that encompassed him.

Right stately was his chamber, soft and white
The pillow, and his quilt was eider-down.
What matter'd it to him though all that night
The desolate driving cloud might lower and frown,
And winds were up the eddying sleet to chase,
That drave and drave and found no settling-place ?

What matter'd it that leafless trees might rock,
 Or snow might drift athwart his window-pane ?
 He bare a charmed life against their shock,
 Secure from cold, hunger, and weather stain ;
 Fixed in his right, and born to good estate,
 From common ills set by and separate.

From work and want and fear of want apart,
 This man (men called him Justice Wilvermore)—
 This man had comforted his cheerful heart
 With all that it desired from every shore.
 He had a right,—the right of gold is strong,—
 He stood upon his right his whole life long.

Custom makes all things easy, and content
 Is careless ; therefore on the storm and cold,
 As he lay waking, never a thought he spent,
 Albeit across the vale beneath the wold,
 Along a reedy mere that frozen lay,
 A range of sordid hovels stretched away.

What cause had he to think on them, forsooth ?
 What cause that night beyond another night ?
 He was familiar even from his youth
 With their long ruin and their evil plight.
 The wintry wind would search them like a scout,
 The water froze within as freely as without.

He think upon them ? No ! They were forlorn,
 So were the cowering inmates whom they held ;
 A thriftless tribe, to shifts and leanness born,
 Ever complaining : infancy or eld
 Alike. But there was rent, or long ago
 Those cottage roofs had met with overthrow.

For this they stood ; and what his thoughts might be
 That winter night, I know not ; but I know
 That, while the creeping flame fed silently
 And cast upon his bed a crimson glow,
 The Justice slept, and shortly in his sleep
 He fell to dreaming, and his dream was deep.

He dreamed that over him a shadow came ;
And when he looked to find the cause, behold
Some person knelt between him and the flame :—
A cowering figure of one frail and old—
A woman ; and she prayed, as he descried,
And spread her feeble hands, and shook and sighed.

‘ Good Heaven ! ’ the Justice cried, and being distraught
He called not to her, but he looked again :
She wore a tatter’d cloak, but she had nought
Upon her head ; and she did quake amain,
And spread her wasted hands and poor attire
To gather in the brightness of his fire.

‘ I know you, woman ! ’ then the Justice cried ;
‘ I know that woman well,’ he cried aloud ;
‘ The shepherd Aveland’s widow : God me guide !
A pauper kneeling on my hearth : and bow’d,
The hag, like one at home, its warmth to share !
‘ How dares she to intrude ? What does she there ?

‘ Ho, woman, ho ! ’—but yet she did not stir,
Though from her lips a fitful plaining broke ;
‘ I’ll ring my people up to deal with her ;
I’ll rouse the house,’ he cried ; but while he spoke
He turned, and saw, but distant from his bed,
Another form—a Darkness with a head.

Then, in a rage, he shouted ‘ Who are you ? ’
For little in the gloom he might discern.
‘ Speak out ; speak now ; or I will make you rue
The hour ! ’ but there was silence, and a stern,
Dark face from out the dusk appeared to lean,
And then again drew back, and was not seen.

‘ God ! ’ cried the dreaming man, right impiously,
‘ What have I done, that these my sleep affray ? ’
‘ God ! ’ said the Phantom, ‘ I appeal to Thee,
Appoint Thou me this man to be my prey.’
‘ God ! ’ sighed the kneeling woman, frail and old,
‘ I pray Thee take me, for the world is cold.’

Then said the trembling Justice, in affright,
 ' Fiend, I adjure thee, speak thine errand here ! '
 And lo ! it pointed in the failing light
 Toward the woman, answering, cold and clear,
 ' Thou art ordained an answer to thy prayer ;
 But first to tell *her* tale that kneeleth there.'

' *Her* tale ! ' the Justice cried. ' A pauper's tale ! '
 And he took heart at this so low behest,
 And let the stoutness of his will prevail,
 Demanding, ' Is 't for *her* you break my rest ?
 She went to gaol of late for stealing wood,
 She will again for this night's hardihood.

' I sent her ; and to-morrow, as I live,
 I will commit her for this trespass here.'
 ' Thou wilt not ! ' quoth the Shadow, ' thou wilt give
 Her story words ; ' and then it stalked anear
 And showed a lowering face, and, dread to see,
 A countenance of angered majesty.

Then said the Justice, all his thoughts astray,
 With that material Darkness chiding him,
 ' If this must be, then speak to her, I pray,
 And bid her move, for all the room is dim
 By reason of the place she holds to-night :
 She kneels between me and the warmth and light '

' With adjurations deep and drawings strong,
 And with the power,' it said, ' unto me given,
 I call upon thee, man, to tell thy wrong,
 Or look no more upon the face of Heaven.
 Speak ! though she kneel throughout the livelong night,
 And yet shall kneel between thee and the light.'

This when the Justice heard, he raised his hands,
 And held them as the dead in effigy
 Hold theirs, when carved upon a tomb. The bands
 Of fate had bound him fast : no remedy
 Was left : his voice unto himself was strange,
 And that unearthly vision did not change.

He said, ' That woman dwells anear my door,
Her life and mine began the selfsame day,
And I am hale and hearty : from my store
I never spared her aught : she takes her way
Of me unheeded ; pining, pinching care
Is all the portion that she has to share.

' She is a broken-down, poor, friendless wight,
Through labour and through sorrow early old ;
And I have known of this her evil plight,
Her scanty earnings, and her lodgement cold ;
A patienter poor soul shall ne'er be found :
She laboured on my land the long year round.

' What wouldst thou have me say, thou fiend abhorred?
Show me no more thine awful visage grim.
If thou obey'st a greater, tell thy lord
That I have paid her wages. Cry to him !
He has not *much* against me. None can say
I have not paid her wages day by day.

' The spell ! It draws me. I must speak again ;
And speak against myself ; and speak aloud.
The woman once approached me to complain,—
" My wages are so low." I may be proud ;
It is a fault.' ' Aye,' quoth the Phantom fell,
' Sinner ! it is a fault : thou sayest well.'

' She made her moan, " My wages are so low." '
' Tell on ! ' ' She said,' he answered, " My best days
Are ended, and the summer is but slow
To come ; and my good strength for work decays
By reason that I live so hard, and lie
On winter nights so bare for poverty." '

' And you replied—,' began the lowering shade,
' And I replied,' the Justice followed on,
' That wages like to mine my neighbour paid ;
And if I raised the wages of the one
Straight should the others murmur ; furthermore,
The winter was as winters gone before,

‘No colder and not longer.’ ‘Afterward?—’

The Phantom questioned. ‘Afterward,’ he groaned,
‘She said my neighbour was a right good lord,

Never a roof was broken that he owned ;
He gave much coal and clothing. “Doth he so ?
Work for my neighbour, then,” I answered. “Go !

“You are full welcome.” Then she mumbled out

She hoped I was not angry ; hoped, forsooth,
I would forgive her : and I turned about,
And said I should be angry in good truth
If this should be again, or ever more
She dared to stop me thus at the church door.’

‘Then ?’ quoth the Shade ; and he, constrained, said on,

‘Then she, reproved, curtseyed herself away.’
‘Hast met her since ?’ it made demand anon ;
And after pause the Justice answered, ‘Aye ;
Some wood was stolen ; my people made a stir :
She was accused, and I did sentence her.’

But yet, and yet, the dreaded questions came :

‘And didst thou weigh the matter—taking thought
Upon her sober life and honest fame ?’

‘I gave it,’ he replied, with gaze distraught ;
‘I gave it, Fiend, the usual care ; I took
The usual pains ; I could not nearer look,

Because—because their pilfering had got head.

What wouldst thou more ? The neighbours pleaded
hard,

’T is true, and many tears the creature shed ;

But I had vowed their prayers to disregard,
Heavily strike the first that robbed my land,
And put down thieving with a steady hand.

‘She said she was not guilty. Aye, ’t is true

She said so, but the poor are liars all.

O thou fell Fiend, what wilt thou ? Must I view

Thy darkness yet, and must thy shadow fall
Upon me miserable ? I have done
No worse, no more than many a scathless one.’

‘ Yet,’ quoth the Shade, ‘ if ever to thine ears
 The knowledge of her blamelessness was brought,
 Or others have confessed with dying tears
 The crime she suffered for, and thou hast wrought
 All reparation in thy power, and told
 Into her empty hand thy brightest gold :—

‘ If thou hast honoured her, and hast proclaimed
 Her innocence and thy deplored wrong,
 Still thou art nought ; for thou shalt yet be blamed
 In that she, feeble, came before thee strong,
 And thou, in cruel haste to deal a blow,
 Because thou hadst been angered, worked her woe.

‘ But didst thou right her ? Speak !’ The Justice
 sighed,
 And beaded drops stood out upon his brow.
 ‘ How could I humble me,’ forlorn he cried,
 ‘ To a base beggar ? Nay, I will avow
 That I did ill. I will reveal the whole ;
 I kept that knowledge in my secret soul.’

‘ Hear him !’ the Phantom muttered ; ‘ hear this man,
 O changeless God upon the judgement throne.’
 With that, cold tremors through his pulses ran,
 And lamentably he did make his moan ;
 While, with its arms upraised above his head,
 The dim dread visitor approached his bed.

‘ Into these doors,’ it said, ‘ which thou hast closed,
 Daily this woman shall from henceforth come ;
 Her kneeling form shall yet be interposed
 Till all thy wretched hours have told their sum ;
 Shall yet be interposed by day, by night,
 Between thee, sinner, and the warmth and light.

‘ Remembrance of her want shall make thy meal
 Like ashes, and thy wrong thou shalt not right.
 But what ! Nay, verily, nor wealth nor weal
 From henceforth shall afford thy soul delight.
 Till men shall lay thy head beneath the sod,
 There shall be no deliverance, saith my God.’

‘Tell me thy name,’ the dreaming Justice cried ;
 ‘By what appointment dost thou doom me thus ?’
 ‘T is well that thou shouldst know me,’ it replied,
 ‘For mine thou art, and nought shall sever us ;
 From thine own lips and life I draw my force :
 The name thy nation give me is REMORSE.’

This when he heard, the dreaming man cried out,
 And woke affrighted ; and a crimson glow
 The dying ember shed. Within, without,
 In eddying rings the silence seemed to flow ;
 The wind had lulled, and on his forehead shone
 The last low gleam ; he was indeed alone.

‘O, I have had a fearful dream,’ said he ;
 ‘I will take warning and for mercy trust ;
 The fiend Remorse shall never dwell with me :
 I will repair that wrong, I will be just,
 I will be kind, I will my ways amend.’
Now the first dream is told unto its end.

Anigh the frozen mere a cottage stood,
 A piercing wind swept round and shook the door,
 The shrunken door, and easy way made good,
 And drave long drifts of snow along the floor.
 It sparkled there like diamonds, for the moon
 Was shining in, and night was at the noon.

Before her dying embers, bent and pale,
 A woman sat because her bed was cold ;
 She heard the wind, the driving sleet and hail,
 And she was hunger-bitten, weak and old ;
 Yet while she cowered, and while the casement shook,
 Upon her trembling knees she held a book—

A comfortable book for them that mourn,
 And good to raise the courage of the poor ;
 It lifts the veil and shows, beyond the bourne,
 Their Elder Brother, from His home secure,
 That for them desolate He died to win,
 Repeating, ‘Come, ye blessed, enter in.’

What thought she on, this woman ? on her days
Of toil, or on the supperless night forlorn ?
I think not so ; the heart but seldom weighs
With conscious care a burden always borne ;
And she was used to these things, had grown old
In fellowship with toil, hunger, and cold.

Then did she think how sad it was to live
Of all the good this world can yield bereft ?
No, her untutored thoughts she did not give
To such a theme ; but in their warp and weft
She wove a prayer : then in the midnight deep
Faintly and slow she fell away to sleep.

A strange, a marvellous sleep, which brought a dream,
And it was this : that all at once she heard
The pleasant babbling of a little stream
That ran beside her door, and then a bird
Broke out in songs. She looked, and lo ! the rime
And snow had melted ; it was summer time !

And all the cold was over, and the mere
Full sweetly swayed the flags and rushes green ;
The mellow sunlight poured right warm and clear
Into her casement, and thereby were seen
Fair honeysuckle flowers, and wandering bees
Were hovering round the blossom-laden trees.

She said, ‘ I will betake me to my door,
And will look out and see this wondrous sight,
How summer is come back, and frost is o’er,
And all the air warm waxen in a night.’
With that she opened, but for fear she cried,
For lo ! two Angels—one on either side.

And while she looked, with marvelling measureless,
The Angels stood conversing face to face,
But neither spoke to her. ‘ The wilderness—’
One Angel said, ‘ the solitary place—
Shall yet be glad for Him.’ And then full fain
The other Angel answered, ‘ He shall reign.’

And when the woman heard, in wondering wise,
 She whispered, 'They are speaking of my Lord.'
 And straightway swept across the open skies
 Multitudes like to these. They took the word,
 That flock of Angels, 'He shall come again,
 My Lord, my Lord!' they sang, 'and He shall reign!

Then they, drawn up into the blue o'erhead,
 Right happy, shining ones, made haste to flee;
 And those before her one to other said,
 'Behold He stands aneath yon almond tree.'
 This when the woman heard, she fain had gazed,
 But paused for reverence, and bowed down amazed.

After she looked, for this her dream was deep;
 She looked, and there was nought beneath the tree;
 Yet did her love and longing overleap
 The fear of Angels, awful though they be,
 And she passed out between the blessed things,
 And brushed her mortal weeds against their wings.

O, all the happy world was in its best,
 The trees were covered thick with buds and flowers,
 And these were dropping honey; for the rest,
 Sweetly the birds were piping in their bowers;
 Across the grass did groups of Angels go,
 And Saints in pairs were walking to and fro.

Then did she pass toward the almond tree,
 And none she saw beneath it: yet each Saint
 Upon his coming meekly bent the knee,
 And all their glory as they gazed wax'd faint.
 And then a 'lighting Angel neared the place,
 And folded his fair wings before his face.

She also knelt, and spread her aged hands
 As feeling for the sacred human feet;
 She said, 'Mine eyes are held, but if He stands
 Anear, I will not let Him hence retreat
 Except He bless me.' Then, O sweet! O fair!
 Some words were spoken, but she knew not where.

She knew not if beneath the boughs they woke,
 Or dropt upon her from the realms above ;
 ' What wilt thou, woman ? ' in the dream He spoke,
 ' Thy sorrow moveth Me, thyself I love ;
 Long have I counted up thy mournful years,
 Once I did weep to wipe away thy tears.'

She said : ' My one Redeemer, only blest,
 I know Thy voice, and from my yearning heart
 Draw out my deep desire, my great request,
 My prayer, that I might enter where Thou art.
 Call me, O call from this world troublesome,
 And let me see Thy face.' He answered, ' Come.'

Here is the ending of the second dream.

It is a frosty morning, keen and cold,
 Fast locked are silent mere and frozen stream,
 And snow lies sparkling on the desert wold ;
 With savoury morning meats they spread the board,
 But Justice Wilvermore will walk abroad.

' Bring me my cloak,' quoth he, as one in haste.
 ' Before you breakfast, sir ? ' his man replies.
 ' Aye,' quoth he quickly, and he will not taste
 Of aught before him, but in urgent wise
 As he would fain some carking care allay,
 Across the frozen field he takes his way.

' A dream ! how strange that it should move me so,
 'T was but a dream,' quoth Justice Wilvermore :
 ' And yet I cannot peace nor pleasure know,
 For wrongs I have not heeded heretofore ;
 Silver and gear the crone shall have of me,
 And dwell for life in yonder cottage free.

' For visions of the night are fearful things,
 Remorse is dread, though merely in a dream ;
 I will not subject me to visitings
 Of such a sort again. I will esteem
 My peace above my pride. From natures rude
 A little gold will buy me gratitude.

‘ The woman shall have leave to gather wood,
 As much as she may need, the long year round ;
 She shall, I say—moreover, it were good
 Yon other cottage roofs to render sound.
 Thus to my soul the ancient peace restore,
 And sleep at ease,’ quoth Justice Wilvermore.

With that he nears the door : a frosty rime
 Is branching over it, and drifts are deep
 Against the wall. He knocks, and there is time—
 (For none doth open)—time to list the sweep
 And whistle of the wind along the mere
 Through beds of stiffened reeds and rushes sere.

‘ If she be out, I have my pains for nought,’
 He saith, and knocks again, and yet once more,
 But to his ear nor step nor stir is brought ;
 And after pause, he doth unlatch the door
 And enter. No : she is not out, for see
 She sits asleep ’mid frost-work winterly.

Asleep, asleep before her empty grate,
 Asleep, asleep, albeit the landlord call.
 ‘ What, dame,’ he saith, and comes toward her straight,
 ‘ Asleep so early ! ’ But whate’er befall,
 She sleepeth ; then he nears her, and behold
 He lays a hand on hers, and it is cold.

Then doth the Justice to his home return ;
 From that day forth he wears a sadder brow ;
 His hands are opened, and his heart doth learn
 The patience of the poor. He made a vow
 And keeps it, for the old and sick have shared
 His gifts, their sordid homes he hath repaired.

And some he hath made happy, but for him
 Is happiness no more. He doth repent,
 And now the light of joy is waxen dim,
 Are all his hopes toward the Highest sent ;
 He looks for mercy, and he waits release
 Above, for this world doth not yield him peace.

Night after night, night after desolate night,
 Day after day, day after tedious day,
 Stands by his fire, and dulls its gleamy light,
 Paceth behind or meets him in the way ;
 Or shares the path by hedgerow, mere, or stream,
 The visitor that doomed him in his dream.

Thy kingdom come.
 I heard a Seer cry—‘ The wilderness,
 The solitary place,
 Shall yet be glad for Him, and He shall bless
 (Thy kingdom come) with His revealed face
 The forests ; they shall drop their precious gum,
 And shed for Him their balm : and He shall yield
 The grandeur of His speech to charm the field.

‘ Then all the soothèd winds shall drop to listen,
 (Thy kingdom come), 10
 Comforted waters waxen calm shall glisten
 With bashful tremblement beneath His smile :
 And Echo ever the while
 Shall take, and in her awful joy repeat,
 The laughter of His lips—(Thy kingdom come) :
 And hills that sit apart shall be no longer dumb ;
 No, they shall shout and shout,
 Raining their lovely loyalty along the dewy plain :
 And valleys round about,
 ‘ And all the well-contented land, made sweet 20
 With flowers she opened at His feet,
 Shall answer ; shout and make the welkin ring
 And tell it to the stars, shout, shout, and sing ;
 Her cup being full to the brim,
 Her poverty made rich with Him,
 Her yearning satisfied to its utmost sum—
 Lift up thy voice, O earth, prepare thy song,
 It shall not yet be long,
 Lift up, O earth, for He shall come again,
 Thy Lord : and He shall reign, and He SHALL reign— 30
 Thy kingdom come.’

SONGS ON THE VOICES OF BIRDS

INTRODUCTION

CHILD AND BOATMAN

‘ MARTIN, I wonder who makes all the songs.’

‘ You do, sir ? ’

‘ Yes, I wonder how they come.’

‘ Well, boy, I wonder what you’ll wonder next ! ’

‘ But somebody must make them ? ’

‘ Sure enough.’

‘ Does your wife know ? ’

‘ She never said she did.’

‘ You told me that she knew so many things.’

‘ I said she was a London woman, sir,

And a fine scholar, but I never said

She knew about the songs.’

‘ I wish she did.’

‘ And I wish no such thing ; she knows enough,

She knows too much already. Look you now,

This vessel ’s off the stocks, a tidy craft.’

‘ A schooner, Martin ? ’

‘ No, boy, no ; a brig,

Only she ’s schooner-rigged—a lovely craft.’

‘ Is she for me ? O, thank you, Martin, dear.

What shall I call her ? ’

‘ Well, sir, what you please.’

‘ Then write on her “ The Eagle ”.’

‘ Bless the child !

Eagle ! why, you know nought of eagles, you.

When we lay off the coast, up Canada way,

And chanced to be ashore when twilight fell,

That was the place for eagles ; bald they were,

With eyes as yellow as gold.’

‘ O, Martin, dear,

Tell me about them.’

‘ Tell ! there ’s nought to tell,

Only they snored o’ nights and frightened us.’

‘ Snored ? ’

‘ Aye, I tell you, snored ; they slept upright

In the great oaks by scores ; as true as time,

10

20

If I'd had aught upon my mind just then,
 I wouldn't have walked that wood for unknown gold ;
 It was most awful. When the moon was full,
 I've seen them fish at night, in the middle watch, 30
 When she got low. I've seen them plunge like stones,
 And come up fighting with a fish as long,
 Ay, longer than my arm ; and they would sail—
 When they had struck its life out—they would sail
 Over the deck, and show their fell, fierce eyes,
 And croon for pleasure, hug the prey, and speed
 Grand as a frigate on a wind.'

' My ship,
 She must be called " The Eagle " after these.
 And, Martin, ask your wife about the songs
 When you go in at dinner-time.'

' Not I.'

40

THE NIGHTINGALE HEARD BY THE UNSATISFIED HEART

WHEN in a May-day hush
 Chanteth the Missel-thrush,
 The harp o' the heart makes answer with murmurous
 stirs ;
 When Robin-redbreast sings,
 We think on budding springs,
 And Culvers when they coo are love's remembrancers.

But thou in the trance of light
 Stayest the feeding night,
 And Echo makes sweet her lips with the utterance wise,
 And casts at our glad feet,
 In a wisp of fancies fleet,
 Life's fair, life's unfulfilled, impassioned prophecies.

Her central thought full well
 Thou hast the wit to tell,
 To take the sense o' the dark and to yield it so ;
 The moral of moon light
 To set in a cadence bright,
 And sing our loftiest dream that we thought none did
 know.

I have no nest as thou,
 Bird on the blossoming bough,
 Yet over thy tongue outfloweth the song o' my soul,
 Chanting, 'forego thy strife,
 The spirit out-acts the life,
 But MUCH is seldom theirs who can perceive THE WHOLE.
 'Thou drawest a perfect lot
 All thine, but holden not,
 Lie low, at the feet of beauty that ever shall bide ;
 There might be sorer smart
 Than thine, far-seeing heart,
 Whose fate is still to yearn, and not be satisfied.'

SAND-MARTINS

I PASSED an inland-cliff precipitate ;
 From tiny caves peeped many a sooty poll ;
 In each a mother-martin sat elate,
 And of the news delivered her small soul.
 Fantastic chatter ! hasty, glad, and gay,
 Whereof the meaning was not ill to tell :
 ' Gossip, how wags the world with you to-day ? '
 ' Gossip, the world wags well, the world wags well.'
 And heark'ning, I was sure their little ones
 Were in the bird-talk, and discourse was made
 Concerning hot sea-bights and tropic suns,
 For a clear sultriness the tune conveyed ;—
 And visions of the sky as of a cup
 Hailing down light on pagan Pharaoh's sand,
 And quivering air-waves trembling up and up,
 And blank stone faces marvellously bland.
 ' When should the young be fledged and with them hie
 Where costly day drops down in crimson light ?
 (Fortunate countries of the firefly
 Swarm with blue diamonds all the sultry night,
 ' And the immortal moon takes turn with them.)
 When should they pass again by that red land,
 Where lovely mirage works a broidered hem
 To fringe with phantom-palms a robe of sand ?

‘ When should they dip their breasts again and play
 In slumberous azure pools clear as the air,
 Where rosy-winged flamingos fish all day,
 Stalking amid the lotus blossom fair ?

‘ Then, over podded tamarinds bear their flight,
 While cassias blossom in the zone of calms,
 And so betake them to a south sea-bight
 To gossip in the crowns of cocoa-palms

‘ Whose roots are in the spray. O, haply there
 Some dawn, white-wingèd they might chance to find
 A frigate standing in to make more fair
 The loneliness unaltered of mankind.

‘ A frigate come to water : nuts would fall,
 And nimble feet would climb the flower-flushed strand,
 While northern talk would ring, and therewithal
 The martins would desire the cool north land.

‘ And all would be as it had been before ;
 Again at eve there would be news to tell ;
 Who passed should hear them chant it o’er and o’er,
 “ Gossip, how wags the world ? ” “ Well, gossip, well.” ’

A POET IN HIS YOUTH, AND THE CUCKOO-BIRD

ONCE upon a time, I lay
 Fast asleep at dawn of day ;
 Windows open to the south,
 Fancy pouting her sweet mouth
 To my ear.

She turned a globe
 In her slender hand, her robe
 Was all spangled ; and she said,
 As she sat at my bed’s head,
 ‘ Poet, poet, what, asleep !
 ‘ Look ! the ray runs up the steep
 To your roof.’ Then in the golden
 Essence of romances olden,

Bathed she my entrancèd heart.
 And she gave a hand to me,
 Drew me onward, 'Come!' said she;
 And she moved with me apart,
 Down the lovely vale of Leisure.

Such its name was, I heard say,
 For some Fairies trooped that way;
 Common people of the place, 20
 Taking their accustom'd pleasure,
 (All the clocks being stopped) to race
 Down the slope on palfreys fleet.
 Bridle bells make tinkling sweet;
 And they said, 'What signified
 Faring home till eventide:
 There were pies on every shelf,
 And the bread would bake itself.'
 But for that I cared not, fed,
 As it were, with angels' bread, 30
 Sweet as honey; yet next day
 All foredoomed to melt away;
 Gone before the sun waxed hot,
 Melted manna that *was not*.

Rock-doves' poetry of plaint,
 Or the starling's courtship quaint;
 Heart made much of, 't was a boon
 Won from silence, and too soon
 Wasted in the ample air:
 Building rooks far distant were. 40
 Scarce at all would speak the rills,
 And I saw the idle hills,
 In their amber hazes deep,
 Fold themselves and go to sleep,
 Though it was not yet high noon.

Silence? Rather music brought
 From the spheres! As if a thought,
 Having taken wings, did fly
 Through the reaches of the sky.
 Silence? No, a sumptuous sigh 50
 That had found embodiment,
 That had come across the deep

After months of wintry sleep,
And with tender heavings went
Floating up the firmament.

‘ O,’ I mourned, half slumbering yet,
‘ ’Tis the voice of *my* regret—
Mine !’ and I awoke. Full sweet
Saffron sunbeams did me greet ;
And the voice it spake again, 60
Dropped from yon blue cup of light
Or some cloudlet swan’s-down white
On my soul, that drank full fain
The sharp joy—the sweet pain—
Of its clear, right innocent,
Unreprovèd discontent.

How it came—where it went—
Who can tell ? The open blue
Quivered with it, and I, too,
Trembled. I remembered me , 70
Of the springs that used to be,
When a dimpled white-haired child,
Shy and tender and half wild,
In the meadows I had heard
Some way off the talking bird,
And had felt it marvellous sweet,
For it laughed : it did me greet,
Calling me : yet, hid away
In the woods, it would not play.
No.

And all the world about, 80
While a man will work or sing,
Or a child pluck flowers of spring,
Thou wilt scatter music out,
Rouse him with thy wandering note,
Changeful fancies set afloat,
Almost tell with thy clear throat,
But not quite—the wonder-rife,
Most sweet riddle, dark and dim,
That he searcheth all his life,
Searcheth yet, and ne’er expoundeth ; 90
And so winnowing of thy wings,
Touch and trouble his heart’s strings,

That a certain music soundeth
 In that wondrous instrument,
 With a trembling upward sent,
 That is reckoned sweet above
 By the Greatness surnamed Love.

‘ O, I hear thee in the blue ;
 Would that I might wing it too !
 O to have what hope hath seen !
 O to be what might have been !

100

‘ O to set my life, sweet bird,
 To a tune that oft I heard
 When I used to stand alone
 Listening to the lovely moan
 Of the swaying pines o’erhead,
 While, a-gathering of bee-bread
 For their living, murmured round,
 As the pollen dropped to ground,
 All the nations from the hives ;
 And the little brooding wives
 On each nest, brown dusky things,
 Sat with gold-dust on their wings.
 Then beyond (more sweet than all)
 Talked the tumbling waterfall ;
 And there were, and there were not
 (As might fall, and form anew
 Bell-hung drops of honey-dew)
 Echoes of—I know not what ;
 As if some right-joyous elf,
 While about his own affairs,
 Whistled softly otherwheres.
 Nay, as if our mother dear,
 Wrapped in sun-warm atmosphere,
 Laughed a little to herself,
 Laughed a little as she rolled,
 Thinking on the days of old.

110

‘ Ah ! there be some hearts, I wis,
 To which nothing comes amiss.
 Mine was one. Much secret wealth
 I was heir to : and by stealth,

120

When the moon was fully grown,
And she thought herself alone,
I have heard her, aye, right well,
Shoot a silver message down
To the unseen sentinel
Of a still, snow-thatched town.

‘ Once, awhile ago, I peered
In the nest where Spring was reared.
There, she, quivering her fair wings, 140
Flattered March with chirrupings ;
And they fed her ; nights and days,
Fed her mouth with much sweet food,
And her heart with love and praise,
Till the wild thing rose and flew
Over woods and water-springs,
Shaking off the morning dew
In a rainbow from her wings.

‘ Once (I will to you confide
More), O once in forest wide, 150
I, benighted, overheard
Marvellous mild echoes stirred,
And a calling half defined,
And an answering from afar ;
Somewhat talkèd with a star,
And the talk was of mankind.

‘ “ Cuckoo, cuckoo ! ”
Float anear in upper blue :
Art thou yet a prophet true ?
Wilt thou say, “ And having seen 160
Things that be, and have not been,
Thou art free o’ the world, for nought
Can despoil thee of thy thought ” ?
Nay, but make me music yet,
Bird, as deep as my regret,
For a certain hope hath set,
Like a star ; and left me heir
To a crying for its light,
An aspiring infinite,
And a beautiful despair ! 170

' Ah ! no more, no more, no more
 I shall lie at thy shut door,
 Mine ideal, my desired,
 Dreaming thou wilt open it,
 And step out, thou most admired,
 By my side to fare, or sit,
 Quenching hunger and all drouth
 With the wit of thy fair mouth,
 Showing me the wished prize
 In the calm of thy dove's eyes,
 Teaching me the wonder-rife
 Majesties of human life,
 All its fairest possible sum,
 And the grace of its to come.

180

' What a difference ! Why of late
 All sweet music used to say,
 " She will come, and with thee stay
 To-morrow, man, if not to-day."
 Now it murmurs, " Wait, wait, wait ! " '

A RAVEN IN A WHITE CHINE

I SAW when I looked up, on either hand,
 A pale high chalk-cliff, reared aloft in white ;
 A narrowing rent soon closed toward the land—
 Toward the sea an open yawning bight.

The polished tide, with scarce a hint of blue,
 Washed in the bight ; above with angry moan
 A raven, that was robbed, sat up in view,
 Croaking and crying on a ledge alone.

' Stand on thy nest, spread out thy fateful wings,
 With sullen hungry love bemoan thy brood,
 For boys have wrung their necks, those imp-like things,
 Whose beaks dripped crimson daily at their food.

' Cry, thou black prophetess ! cry, and despair,
 None love thee, none ! Their father was thy foe,
 Whose father in his youth did know thy lair,
 And steal thy little demons long ago.

‘Thou madest many childless for their sake,
And picked out many eyes that loved the light.
Cry, thou black prophetess ! sit up, awake,
Forebode ; and ban them through the desolate night.’

Lo ! while I spake it, with a crimson hue
The dipping sun endowed that silver flood,
And all the cliffs flushed red, and up she flew,
The bird, as mad to bathe in airy blood.

‘Nay, thou may’st cry, the omen is not thine,
Thou aged priestess of fell doom, and fate.
It is not blood : thy gods are making wine,
They spilt the must outside their city gate,

‘And stained their azure pavement with the lees :
They will not listen though thou cry aloud.
Old Chance, thy dame, sits mumbling at her ease,
Nor hears ; the fair hag, Luck, is in her shroud.

‘They heed not, they withdraw the sky-hung sign :
Thou hast no charm against the favourite race ;
Thy gods pour out for it, not blood, but wine :
There is no justice in their dwelling-place !

‘Safe in their father’s house the boys shall rest,
Though thy fell brood doth stark and silent lie ;
Their unborn sons may yet despoil thy nest :
Cry, thou black prophetess ! lift up ! cry, cry.’

THE WARBLING OF BLACKBIRDS

WHEN I hear the waters fretting,
When I see the chestnut letting
All her lovely blossom falter down, I think, ‘Alas the
day !’
Once with magical sweet singing,
Blackbirds set the woodland ringing,
That awakes no more while April hours wear themselves
away.

In our hearts fair hope lay smiling,
 Sweet as air, and all beguiling ;
 And there hung a mist of bluebells on the slope and
 down the dell ;
 And we talked of joy and splendour
 That the years unborn would render,
 And the blackbirds helped us with the story, for they
 knew it well.

Piping, fluting, ' Bees are humming,
 April 's here, and summer 's coming ;
 Don't forget us when you walk, a man with men, in
 pride and joy ;
 Think on us in alleys shady,
 When you step a graceful lady ;
 For no fairer day have we to hope for, little girl and boy.

' Laugh and play, O lisp'ing waters,
 Lull our downy sons and daughters ;
 Come, O wind, and rock their leafy cradle in thy wander-
 ings coy ;
 When they wake we'll end the measure
 With a wild sweet cry of pleasure,
 And a " Hey down derry, let 's be merry ! little girl
 and boy ! " '

SEA-MEWS IN WINTER TIME

I WALKED beside a dark grey sea,
 And said, ' O world, how cold thou art !
 Thou poor white world, I pity thee,
 For joy and warmth from thee depart.

' Yon rising wave licks off the snow,
 Winds on the crag each other chase.
 In little powdery whirls they blow
 The misty fragments down its face.

' The sea is cold, and dark its rim,
 Winter sits cowering on the wold,
 And I beside this watery brim,
 Am also lonely, also cold.'

I spoke, and drew toward a rock,
Where many mews made twittering sweet ;
Their wings upreared, the clustering flock
Did pat the sea-grass with their feet.

A rock but half submerged, the sea
Ran up and washed it while they fed ;
Their fond and foolish ecstasy
A wondering in my fancy bred.

Joy companied with every cry,
Joy in their food, in that keen wind,
That heaving sea, that shaded sky,
And in themselves, and in their kind.

The phantoms of the deep at play !
What idless graced the twittering things ;
Luxurious paddlings in the spray,
And delicate lifting up of wings.

Then all at once a flight, and fast
The lovely crowd flew out to sea ;
If mine own life had been recast,
Earth had not looked more changed to me.

‘ Where is the cold ? Yon clouded skies
Have only dropt their curtains low
To shade the old mother where she lies
Sleeping a little, ’neath the snow.

‘ The cold is not in crag, nor scar,
Not in the snows that lap the lea,
Not in yon wings that beat afar,
Delighting, on the crested sea ;

No, nor in yon exultant wind
That shakes the oak and bends the pine.
Look near, look in, and thou shalt find
No sense of cold, fond fool, but thine ! ’

With that I felt the gloom depart,
And thoughts within me did unfold,
Whose sunshine warmed me to the heart—
I walked in joy, and was not cold.

LAURANCE

I

HE knew she did not love him ; but so long
 As rivals were unknown to him, he dwelt
 At ease, and did not find his love a pain.

He had much deference in his nature, need
 To honour—it became him ; he was frank,
 Fresh, hardy, of a joyous mind, and strong—
 Looked all things straight in the face. So when she came
 Before him first, he looked at her, and looked
 No more, but coloured to his healthful brow,
 And wished himself a better man, and thought 10
 On certain things, and wished they were undone,
 Because her girlish innocence, the grace
 Of her unblemished pureness, wrought in him
 A longing and aspiring, and a shame
 To think how wicked was the world—that world
 Which he must walk in—while from her (and such
 As she was) it was hidden ; there was made
 A clean path, and the girl moved on like one
 In some enchanted ring.

In his young heart

She reigned, with all the beauties that she had, 20
 And all the virtues that he rightly took
 For granted ; there he set her with her crown,
 And at her first enthronement he turned out
 Much that was best away, for unaware
 His thoughts grew noble. She was always there
 And knew it not, and he grew like to her
 And like to what he thought her.

Now he dwelt

With kin that loved him well—two fine old folk,
 A rich, right honest yeoman, and his dame—
 Their only grandson he, their pride, their heir. 30

To these, one daughter had been born, one child,
 And as she grew to woman, ‘ Look,’ they said,
 ‘ She must not leave us ; let us build a wing,

With cheerful rooms and wide, to our old grange ;
 There may she dwell, with her good man, and all
 God sends them.' Then the girl in her first youth
 Married a curate—handsome, poor in purse,
 Of gentle blood and manners, and he lived
 Under her father's roof as they had planned.

Full soon, for happy years are short, they filled 40
 The house with children ; four were born to them.
 Then came a sickly season ; fever spread
 Among the poor. The curate, never slack
 In duty, praying by the sick, or worse,
 Burying the dead, when all the air was clogged
 With poisonous mist, was stricken ; long he lay
 Sick, almost to the death, and when his head
 He lifted from the pillow, there was left
 One only of that pretty flock : his girls,
 His three, were cold beneath the sod ; his boy, 50
 Their eldest born, remained.

The drooping wife

Bore her great sorrow in such quiet wise,
 That first they marvelled at her, then they tried
 To rouse her, showing her their bitter grief,
 Lamenting, and not sparing ; but she sighed,
 ' Let me alone, it will not be for long.'
 Then did her mother tremble, murmuring out,
 ' Dear child, the best of comfort will be soon.
 O, when you see this other little face,
 You will, please God, be comforted.'

She said, 60

' I shall not live to see it ; ' but she did—
 A little sickly face, a wan, thin face.
 Then she grew eager, and her eyes were bright
 When she would plead with them, ' Take me away,
 Let me go south ; it is the bitter blast
 That chills my tender babe ; she cannot thrive
 Under the desolate, dull, mournful cloud.'
 Then all they journeyed south together, mute
 With past and coming sorrow, till the sun,
 In gardens edging the blue tideless main, 70
 Warmed them and calmed the aching at their hearts,
 And all went better for awhile ; but not

For long. They sitting by the orange trees
 Once rested, and the wife was very still :
 A woman with narcissus flowers heaped up
 Let down her basket from her head, but paused
 With pitying gesture, and drew near and stooped,
 Taking a white wild face upon her breast—
 The little babe on its poor mother's knees,
 None marking it, none knowing else, had died.

80

The fading mother could not stay behind,
 Her heart was broken ; but it awed them most
 To feel they must not, dared not, pray for life,
 Seeing she longed to go, and went so gladly.

After, these three, who loved each other well,
 Brought their one child away, and they were best
 Together in the wide old grange. Full oft
 The father with the mother talked of her,
 Their daughter, but the husband never more ;
 He looked for solace in his work, and gave
 His mind to teach his boy. And time went on,
 Until the grandsire prayed those other two
 ' Now part with him ; it must be ; for his good :
 He rules and knows it ; choose for him a school,
 Let him have all advantages, and all
 Good training that should make a gentleman.'

90

With that they parted from their boy, and lived
 Longing between his holidays, and time
 Sped ; he grew on till he had eighteen years.
 His father loved him, wished to make of him
 Another parson ; but the farmer's wife
 Murmured at that—' No, no, they learned bad ways,
 They ran in debt at college ; she had heard
 That many rued the day they sent their boys
 To college : ' and between the two broke in
 His grandsire, ' Find a sober, honest man,
 A scholar, for our lad should see the world
 While he is young, that he may marry young.
 He will not settle and be satisfied
 Till he has run about the world awhile.
 Good lack, I longed to travel in my youth,

100

110

And had no chance to do it. Send him off,
 A sober man being found to trust him with,
 One with the fear of God before his eyes.'
 And he prevailed ; the careful father chose
 A tutor, young—the worthy matron thought—
 In truth, not ten years older than her boy,
 And glad as he to range, and keen for snows,
 Desert, and ocean. And they made strange choice
 Of where to go, left the sweet day behind, 120
 And pushed up north in whaling ships, to feel
 What cold was, see the blowing whale come up,
 And Arctic creatures, while a scarlet sun
 Went round and round, crowd on the clear blue berg.

Then did the trappers have them ; and they heard
 Nightly the whistling calls of forest-men
 That mocked the forest winners ; and they saw
 Over the open, raging up like doom,
 The dangerous dust-cloud, that was full of eyes—
 The bisons. So were three years gone like one ; 130
 And the old cities drew them for awhile,
 Great mothers, by the Tiber and the Seine ;
 They have hid many sons hard by their seats,
 But all the air is stirring with them still,
 The waters murmur of them, skies at eve
 Are stained with their rich blood, and every sound
 Means men.

At last, the fourth year running out,
 The youth came home. And all the cheerful house
 Was decked in fresher colours, and the dame
 Was full of joy. But in the father's heart 140
 Abode a painful doubt. ' It is not well ;
 He cannot spend his life with dog and gun.
 I do not care that my one son should sleep
 Merely for keeping him in breath, and wake
 Only to ride to cover.'

Not the less

The grandsire ponder'd. ' Aye, the boy must WORK
 Or SPEND ; and I must let him spend ; just stay
 Awhile with us, and then from time to time
 Have leave to be away with those fine folk
 With whom, these many years, at school, and now, 150

During his sojourn in the foreign towns,
 He has been made familiar.' Thus a month
 Went by. They liked the stirring ways of youth,
 The quick elastic step, and joyous mind,
 Ever expectant of it knew not what,
 But something higher than has e'er been born
 Of easy slumber and sweet competence.
 And as for him—the while they thought and thought
 A comfortable instinct let him know
 How they had waited for him, to complete 160
 And give a meaning to their lives ; and still
 At home, but with a sense of newness there,
 And frank and fresh as in the schoolboy days,
 He oft—invading of his father's haunts,
 The study where he passed the silent morn—
 Would sit, devouring with a greedy joy
 The piled-up books, uncut as yet ; or wake
 To guide with him by night the tube, and search,
 Aye, think to find new stars ; then risen betimes,
 Would ride about the farm, and list the talk 170
 Of his hale grandsire.

But a day came round,
 When, after peering in his mother's room,
 Shaded and shuttered from the light, he oped
 A door, and found the rosy grandmother
 Ensconced and happy in her special pride,
 Her store-room. She was corking syrups rare,
 And fruits all sparkling in a crystal coat.
 Here after choice of certain cates well known,
 He, sitting on her bacon-chest at ease,
 Sang as he watched her, till right suddenly. 180
 As if a new thought came, ' Goody,' quoth he,
 ' What, think you, do they want to do with me ?
 What have they planned for me that I should do ? '

' Do, laddie ! ' quoth she faltering, half in tears ;
 ' Are you not happy with us, not content ?
 Why would ye go away ? There is no need
 That ye should do at all. O, bide at home.
 Have we not plenty ? '

Even so,' he said ;
 ' I did not wish to go.'

‘Nay, then,’ quoth she,
‘Be idle; let me see your blessed face. 190
What, is the horse your father chose for you
Not to your mind? He is? Well, well, remain;
Do as you will, so you but do it here.
You shall not want for money.’

But, his arms
Folding, he sat and twisted up his mouth
With comical discomfiture.

‘What, then,’
She sighed, ‘what is it, child, that you would like?’
‘Why,’ said he, ‘farming.’

And she looked at him,
Fond, foolish woman that she was, to find
Some fitness in the worker for the work, 200
And she found none. A certain grace there was
Of movement, and a beauty in the face,
Sun-browned and healthful beauty that had come
From his grave father; and she thought, ‘Good lack,
A farmer! he is fitter for a duke.
He walks; why, how he walks! if I should meet
One like him, whom I knew not, I should ask,
And who may that be?’ So the foolish thought
Found words. Quoth she, half laughing, half ashamed,
‘We planned to make of you—a gentleman.’ 210
And with engaging sweet audacity—
She thought it nothing less,—he, looking up,
With a smile in his blue eyes, replied to her,
‘And hav’n’t you done it?’ Quoth she, lovingly,
‘I think we have, laddie; I think we have.’

‘Then,’ quoth he, ‘I may do what best I like;
It makes no matter. Goody, you were wise
To help me in it, and to let me farm;
I think of getting into mischief else!’
‘No! do ye, laddie?’ quoth the dame, and laughed. 220
‘But ask my grandfather,’ the youth went on,
‘To let me have the farm he bought last year,
The little one, to manage. I like land;
I want some.’ And she, womanlike, gave way
Convinced; and promised, and made good her word,
And that same night upon the matter spoke,
In presence of the father and the son.

' Roger,' quoth she, ' our Laurance wants to farm ;
 ' I think he might do worse.' The father sat
 Mute but right glad. The grandson breaking in, 230
 Set all his wish and his ambition forth ;
 But cunningly the old man hid his joy,
 And made conditions with a faint demur.
 Then pausing, ' Let your father speak,' quoth he ;
 ' I am content if he is : ' at his word
 The parson took him, aye, and, parson like,
 Put a religious meaning in the work,
 Man's earliest work, and wished his son God speed.

II

Thus all were satisfied, and day by day,
 For two sweet years a happy course was theirs ; 240
 Happy, but yet the fortunate, the young
 Loved, and much cared-for, entered on his strife—
 A stirring of the heart, a quickening keen
 Of sight and hearing to the delicate
 Beauty and music of an altered world ;
 Began to walk in that mysterious light
 Which doth reveal and yet transform ; which gives
 Destiny, sorrow, youth, and death, and life,
 Intenser meaning ; in disquieting
 Lifts up ; a shining light : men call it Love. 250

Fair, modest eyes had she, the girl he loved ;
 A silent creature, thoughtful, grave, sincere.
 She never turned from him with sweet caprice,
 Nor changing moved his soul to troublous hope,
 Nor dropped for him her heavy lashes low,
 But excellent in youthful grace came up ;
 And ere his words were ready, passing on,
 Had left him all a-tremble ; yet made sure
 That by her own true will, and fixed intent,
 She held him thus remote. Therefore, albeit 260
 He knew she did not love him, yet so long
 As of a rival unaware, he dwelt
 All in the present, without fear, or hope,
 Enthralled and whelmed in the deep sea of love,
 And could not get his head above its wave
 To search the far horizon, or to mark
 Whereto it drifted him.

So long, so long ;
 Then, on a sudden, came the ruthless fate,
 Showed him a bitter truth, and brought him bale
 All in the tolling out of noon.

'T was thus :

270

Snow-time was come ; it had been snowing hard ;
 Across the churchyard path he walked ; the clock
 Began to strike, and, as he passed the porch,
 Half turning, through a sense that came to him
 As of some presence in it, he beheld
 His love, and she had come for shelter there ;
 And all her face was fair with rosy bloom,
 The blush of happiness ; and one held up
 Her ungloved hand in both his own, and stooped
 Toward it, sitting by her. O her eyes
 Were full of peace and tender light : they looked
 One moment in the ungraced lover's face
 While he was passing in the snow ; and he
 Received the story, while he raised his hat
 Retiring. Then the clock left off to strike,
 And that was all. It snowed, and he walked on ;
 And in a certain way he marked the snow,
 And walked, and came upon the open heath ;
 And in a certain way he marked the cold,
 And walked as one that had no starting-place
 Might walk, but not to any certain goal.

280

290

And he strode on toward a hollow part,
 Where from the hillside gravel had been dug,
 And he was conscious of a cry, and went
 Dulled in his sense, as though he heard it not ;
 Till a small farmhouse drudge, a half-grown girl,
 Rose from the shelter of a drift that lay
 Against the bushes, crying, ' God ! O God,
 O my good God, He sends us help at last.'

Then looking hard upon her, came to him
 The power to feel and to perceive. Her teeth
 Chattered, and all her limbs with shuddering failed,
 And in her threadbare shawl was wrapped a child
 That looked on him with wondering, wistful eyes.

300

' I thought to freeze,' the girl broke out with tears ;
 ' Kind sir, kind sir,' and she held out the child,
 As praying him to take it ; and he did ;
 And gave to her the shawl, and swathed his charge
 In the foldings of his plaid ; and when it thrust
 Its small round face against his breast, and felt 310
 With small red hands for warmth,—unbearable
 Pains of great pity rent his straitened heart,
 For the poor upland dwellers had been out
 Since morning dawn, at early milking time,
 Wandering and stumbling in the drift. And now,
 Lamed with a fall, half crippled by the cold,
 Hardly prevailed his arm to drag her on,
 That ill-clad child, who yet the younger child
 Had motherly cared to shield. So toiling through
 The great white storm coming, and coming yet, 320
 And coming till the world confounded sat
 With all her fair familiar features gone,
 The mountains muffled in an eddying swirl,
 He led or bore them, and the little one
 Peered from her shelter, pleased ; but oft would mourn
 The elder, ' They will beat me : O my can,
 I left my can of milk upon the moor.'
 And he compared her trouble with his own,
 And had no heart to speak. And yet 't was keen ;
 It filled her to the putting down of pain 330
 And hunger—what could his do more ?

He brought
 The children to their home, and suddenly
 Regained himself, and wondering at himself,
 That he had borne, and yet been dumb so long,
 The weary wailing of the girl : he paid
 Money to buy her pardon ; heard them say,
 ' Peace, we have feared for you ; forget the milk,
 It is no matter ! ' and went forth again
 And waded in the snow, and quietly
 Considered in his patience what to do 340
 With all the dull remainder of his days.

With dusk he was at home, and felt it good
 To hear his kindred talking, for it broke
 A mocking endless echo in his soul,

'It is no matter !' and he could not choose
 But mutter, though the weariness o'ercame
 His spirit, 'Peace, it is no matter ; peace,
 It is no matter !' For he felt that all
 Was as it had been, and his father's heart
 Was easy, knowing not how that same day 350
 Hope with her tender colours and delight
 (He should not care to have him know) were dead ;
 Yea, to all these, his nearest and most dear,
 It was no matter. And he heard them talk
 Of timber felled, of certain fruitful fields,
 And profitable markets.

All for him

Their plans, and yet the echoes swarmed and swam
 About his head, whenever there was pause ;
 'It is no matter !' And his greater self
 Arose in him and fought. 'It matters much, 360
 It matters all to these, that not to-day
 Nor ever they should know it. I will hide
 The wound ; aye, hide it with a sleepless care.
 What ! shall I make these three to drink of rue,
 Because my cup is bitter ?' And he thrust
 Himself in thought away, and made his ears
 Harken, and caused his voice, that yet did seem
 Another, to make answer, when they spoke,
 As there had been no snowstorm, and no porch,
 And no despair.

So this went on awhile 370
 Until the snow had melted from the wold,
 And he, one noonday, wandering up a lane,
 Met on a turn the woman whom he loved.
 Then, even to trembling he was moved : his speech
 Faltered ; but when the common kindly words
 Of greeting were all said, and she passed on,
 He could not bear her sweetness and his pain.
 'Muriel !' he cried ; and when she heard her name,
 She turned. 'You know I love you,' he broke out :
 She answered 'Yes,' and sighed.

'O pardon me, 380
 Pardon me,' quoth the lover ; 'let me rest
 In certainty, and hear it from your mouth :
 Is he with whom I saw you once of late

To call you wife ? ' ' I hope so,' she replied ;
 And over all her face the rose-bloom came,
 As thinking on that other, unaware
 Her eyes waxed tender. When he looked on her,
 Standing to answer him, with lovely shame,
 Submiss, and yet not his, a passionate,
 A quickened sense of his great impotence 390
 To drive away the doom got hold on him ;
 He set his teeth to force the unbearable
 Misery back, his wide awakened eyes
 Flashed as with flame.

And she, all overawed
 And mastered by his manhood, waited yet,
 And trembled at the deep she could not sound ;
 A passionate nature in a storm ; a heart
 Wild with a mortal pain, and in the grasp
 Of an immortal love.

' Farewell,' he said,
 Recovering words, and when she gave her hand, 400
 ' My thanks for your good candour ; for I feel
 That it has cost you something.' Then, the blush
 Yet on her face, she said : ' It was your due :
 But keep this matter from your friends and kin,
 We would not have it known.' Then cold and proud,
 Because there leaped from under his straight lids,
 And instantly was veiled, a keen surprise—
 ' He wills it, and I therefore think it well.'
 Thereon they parted ; but from that time forth,
 Whether they met on festal eve, in field, 410
 Or at the church, she ever bore herself
 Proudly, for she had felt a certain pain.
 The disapproval hastily betrayed
 And quickly hidden hurt her. ' 'Twas a grace.'
 She thought, ' to tell this man the thing he asked,
 And he rewards me with surprise. I like
 No one's surprise, and least of all bestowed
 Where he bestowed it.'

But the spring came on :
 Looking to wed in April, all her thoughts
 Grew loving ; she would fain the world had waxed 420
 More happy with her happiness, and oft
 Walking among the flowery woods she felt

Their loveliness reach down into her heart,
And knew with them the ecstasies of growth,
The rapture that was satisfied with light,
The pleasure of the leaf in exquisite
Expansion, through the lovely longed-for spring.

And as for him—(Some narrow hearts there are
That suffer blight when that they fed upon
As something to complete their being fails, 430
And they retire into their holds and pine,
And long restrained grow stern. But some there are
That in a sacred want and hunger rise,
And draw the misery home and live with it,
And excellent in honour wait, and will
That somewhat good should yet be found in it,
Else wherefore were they born ?)—and as for him.
He loved her, but his peace and welfare made
The sunshine of three lives. The cheerful grange
Threw open wide its hospitable doors 440
And drew in guests for him. The garden flowers,
Sweet budding wonders, all were set for him.
In him the eyes at home were satisfied,
And if he did but laugh the ear approved.

What then ? He dwelt among them as of old,
And taught his mouth to smile.

And time went on,

Till on a morning, when the perfect spring
Rested among her leaves, he journeying home
After short sojourn in a neighbouring town,
Stopped at the little station on the line 450
That ran between his woods ; a lonely place
And quiet, and a woman and a child
Got out. He noted them, but walking on
Quickly, went back into the wood, impelled
By hope, for, passing, he had seen his love,
And she was sitting on a rustic seat
That overlooked the line, and he desired
With longing indescribable to look
Upon her face again. And he drew near.
She was right happy ; she was waiting there. 460
He felt that she was waiting for her lord.

She cared no whit if Laurance went or stayed,
But answered when he spoke, and dropped her cheek
In her fair hand.

And he, not able yet
To force himself away, and never more
Behold her, gathered blossom, primrose flowers,
And wild anemone, for many a clump
Grew all about him, and the hazel rods
Were nodding with their catkins. But he heard
The stopping train, and felt that he must go ; 470
His time was come. There was nought else to do
Or hope for. With the blossom he drew near,
And would have had her take it from his hand ;
But she, half-lost in thought, held out her own,
And then remembering him and his long love,
She said, ' I thank you ; pray you now forget,
Forget me, Laurance,' and her lovely eyes
Softened ; but he was dumb, till through the trees
Suddenly broke upon their quietude
The woman and her child. And Muriel said, 480
' What will you ? ' She made answer quick and keen,
' Your name, my lady ; 't is your name I want,
Tell me your name.' Not startled, not displeased,
But with a musing sweetness on her mouth,
As if considering in how short a while
It would be changed, she lifted up her face
And gave it, and the little child drew near
And pulled her gown, and prayed her for the flowers.
Then Laurance, not content to leave them so,
Nor yet to wait the coming lover, spoke, 490
' Your errand with this lady ? '—' And your right
To ask it ? ' she broke out with sudden heat
And passion : ' What is that to you ? Poor child !
Madam ! ' And Muriel lifted up her face
And looked,—they looked into each other's eyes.

' That man who comes,' the clear-voiced woman cried,
' That man with whom you think to wed so soon,
You must not heed him. What ! the world is full
Of men, and some are good, and most, God knows,
Better than he,—that I should say it !—far 500
Better.' And down her face the large tears ran,

And Muriel's wild dilated eyes looked up,
 Taking a terrible meaning from her words ;
 And Laurance stared about him half in doubt
 If this were real, for all things were so blithe,
 And soft air tossed the little flowers about ;
 The child was singing, and the blackbirds piped,
 Glad in fair sunshine. And the women both
 Were quiet, gazing in each other's eyes.

He found his voice, and spake : ' This is not well, 510
 Though whom you speak of should have done you wrong ;
 A man that could desert and plan to wed
 Will not his purpose yield to God and right,
 Only to law. You, whom I pity so much,
 If you be come this day to urge a claim,
 You will not tell me that your claim will hold ;
 'Tis only, if I read aright, the old,
 Sorrowful, hateful story ! '

Muriel sighed,

With a dull patience that he marvelled at,
 ' Be plain with me. I know not what to think, 520
 Unless you are his wife. Are you his wife ?
 Be plain with me.' And all too quietly,
 With running down of tears, the answer came,
 ' Aye, madam, aye ! the worse for him and me.'
 Then Muriel heard her lover's foot anear,
 And cried upon him with a bitter cry,
 Sharp and despairing. And those two stood back,
 With such affright, and violent anger stirred.
 He broke from out the thicket to her side,
 Not knowing. But, her hands before her face, 530
 She sat ; and, stepping close, that woman came
 And faced him. Then said Muriel, ' O my heart,
 Herbert ! '—and he was dumb, and ground his teeth,
 And lifted up his hand and looked at it,
 And at the woman ; but a man was there
 Who whirled her from her place, and thrust himself
 Between them ; he was strong—a stalwart man :
 And Herbert thinking on it, knew his name.
 ' What good,' quoth he, ' though you and I should strive
 And wrestle all this April day ? A word, 540
 And not a blow, is what these women want :

Master yourself, and say it.' But he, weak
 With passion and great anguish, flung himself
 Upon the seat and cried, 'O lost, my love !
 O Muriel, Muriel !' And the woman spoke,
 'Sir, 'twas an evil day you wed with me ;
 And you were young ; I know it, sir, right well.
 Sir, I have worked ; I have not troubled you,
 Not for myself, nor for your child. I know
 We are not equal.' 'Hold !' he cried ; 'have done 550
 Your still, tame words are worse than hate or scorn.
 Get from me ! Ay, my wife, my wife, indeed !
 All's done. You hear it, Muriel, if you can,
 O sweet, forgive me.'

Then the woman moved
 Slowly away : her little singing child
 Went in her wake : and Muriel dropped her hands,
 And sat before these two that loved her so,
 Mute and unheeding. There were angry words,
 She knew, but yet she could not hear the words ;
 And afterwards the man she loved stooped down 560
 And kissed her forehead once, and then withdrew
 To look at her, and with a gesture pray
 Her pardon. And she tried to speak, but failed,
 And presently, and soon, Oh,—he was gone.

She heard him go, and Laurance, still as stone,
 Remained beside her ; and she put her hand
 Before her face again, and afterward
 She heard a voice, as if a long way off,
 Some one entreated, but she could not heed.
 Thereon he drew her hand away, and raised 570
 Her passive from her seat. So then she knew
 That he would have her go with him, go home—
 It was not far to go—a dreary home.
 A crippled aunt, of birth and lineage high,
 Had in her youth, and for a place and home,
 Married the stern old rector ; and the girl
 Dwelt with them : she was orphaned—had no kin
 Nearer than they. And Laurance brought her in,
 And spared to her the telling of this woe.
 He sought her kindred where they sat apart, 580
 And laid before them all the cruel thing,

As he had seen it. After, he retired :
And restless, and not master of himself,
He day and night haunted the rectory lanes ;
And all things, even to the spreading out
Of leaves, their flickering shadows on the ground,
Or sailing of the slow, white cloud, or peace
And glory and great light on mountain heads,—
All things were leagued against him—ministered
By likeness or by contrast to his love.

590

But what was that to Muriel, though her peace
He would have purchased for her with all prayers,
And costly, passionate, despairing tears ?
O what to her that he should find it worse
To bear her life's undoing than his own ?

She let him see her, and she made no moan,
But talked full calmly of indifferent things,
Which when he heard, and marked the faded eyes
And lovely wasted cheek, he started up
With ' This I cannot bear ! ' and shamed to feel 600
His manhood giving way, and utterly
Subdued by her sweet patience and his pain,
Made haste and from the window sprang, and paced,
Battling and chiding with himself, the maze.

She suffered, and he could not make her well
For all his loving ;—he was nought to her.
And now his passionate nature, set astir,
Fought with the pain that could not be endured ;
And like a wild thing suddenly aware
That it is caged, which flings and bruises all 610
Its body at the bars, he rose, and raged
Against the misery : then he made all worse
With tears. But when he came to her again,
Willing to talk as they had talked before,
She sighed, and said, with that strange quietness,
' I know you have been crying : ' and she bent
Her own fair head and wept.

She felt the cold—

The freezing cold that deadened all her life—

Give way a little ; for this passionate
Sorrow, and all for her, relieved her heart, 620
And brought some natural warmth, some natural tears.

III

And after that, though oft he sought her door,
He might not see her. First they said to him,
'She is not well ;' and afterwards, 'Her wish
Is ever to be quiet.' Then in haste
They took her from the place, because so fast
She faded. As for him, though youth and strength
Can bear the weight as of a world, at last
The burden of it tells,—he heard it said,
When autumn came, 'The poor sweet thing will die :
That shock was mortal.' And he cared no more 631
To hide, if yet he could have hidden, the blight
That was laying waste his heart. He journeyed south
To Devon, where she dwelt with other kin,
Good, kindly women ; and he wrote to them,
Praying that he might see her ere she died.
So in her patience she permitted him
To be about her, for it eased his heart ;
And as for her that was to die so soon,
What did it signify ? She let him weep 640
Some passionate tears beside her couch, she spoke
Pitying words, and then they made him go.
It was enough, they said, her time was short,
And he had seen her. He HAD seen, and felt
The bitterness of death ; but he went home,
Being satisfied in that great longing now,
And able to endure what might befall.

And Muriel lay, and faded with the year ;
She lay at the door of death, that opened not
To take her in ; for when the days once more 650
Began a little to increase, she felt—
And it was sweet to her, she was so young—
She felt a longing for the time of flowers,
And dreamed that she was walking in that wood
With her two feet among the primroses.
Then when the violet opened, she rose up
And walked : the tender leaf and tender light

Did solace her ; but she was white and wan,
The shadow of that Muriel, in the wood
Who listened to those deadly words.

And now

660

Empurpled seas began to blush and bloom,
Doves made sweet moaning, and the guelder rose
In a great stillness dropped, and ever dropped,
Her wealth about her feet, and there it lay,
And drifted not at all. The lilac spread
Odorous essence round her ; and full oft,
When Muriel felt the warmth her pulses cheer,
She, faded, sat among the Maytide bloom,
And with a reverent quiet in her soul,
Took back—it was His will—her time, and sat
Learning again to live.

670

Thus as she sat

Upon a day, she was aware of one
Who at a distance marked her. This again
Another day, and she was vexed, for yet
She longed for quiet ; but she heard a foot
Pass once again, and beckoned through the trees.
'Laurance !' And all impatient of unrest
And strife, aye, even of the sight of them,
When he drew near, with tired, tired lips,
As if her soul upbraided him, she said,
'Why have you done this thing ?' He answered her,
'I am not always master in the fight :
I could not help it.'

680

'What !' she sighed, 'not yet !

Oh, I am sorry ;' and she talked to him
As one who looked to live, imploring him—
'Try to forget me. Let your fancy dwell
Elsewhere, nor me enrich with it so long ;
It wearies me to think of this your love.
Forget me !'

He made answer, 'I will try :
The task will take me all my life to learn,
Or were it learned, I know not how to live ;
This pain is part of life and being now—
It is myself ; but yet—but I will try.'
Then she spoke friendly to him—of his home,
His father, and the old, brave, loving folk ;

690

She bade him think of them. And not her words,
 But having seen her, satisfied his heart.
 He left her, and went home to live his life,
 And all the summer heard it said of her,
 ' Yet, she grows stronger ; ' but when autumn came
 Again she drooped.

A bitter thing it is 701

To lose at once the lover and the love ;
 For who receiveth not may yet keep life
 In the spirit with bestowal. But for her,
 This Muriel, all was gone. The man she loved,
 Not only from her present had withdrawn,
 But from her past, and there was no such man.
 There never had been.

He was not as one 710

Who takes love in, like some sweet bird, and holds
 The wingèd fluttering stranger to his breast,
 Till, after transient stay, all unaware
 It leaves him : it has flown. No ; this may live
 In memory—loved till death. He was not vile ;
 For who by choice would part with that pure bird,
 And lose the exaltation of its song ?
 He had not strength of will to keep it fast,
 Nor warmth of heart to keep it warm, nor life
 Of thought to make the echo sound for him
 After the song was done. Pity that man :
 His music is all flown, and he forgets 720
 The sweetness of it, till at last he thinks
 'T was no great matter. But he was not vile,
 Only a thing to pity most in man,
 Weak—only poor, and, if he knew it, undone.
 But Herbert ! When she mused on it, her soul
 Would fain have hidden him for evermore,
 Even from herself : so pure of speech, so frank,
 So full of household kindness. Ah, so good
 And true ! A little, she had sometimes thought,
 Despondent for himself, but strong of faith 730
 In God and faith in her, this man had seemed.

Aye, he was gone ! and she whom he had wed,
 As Muriel learned, was sick, was poor, was sad.
 And Muriel wrote to comfort her, and send,

From her small store, money to help her need,
With, 'Pray you keep it secret.' Then the whole
Of the cruel tale was told.

What more ? She died.

Her kin, profuse of thanks, not bitterly,
Wrote of the end. 'Our sister fain had seen
Her husband ; prayed him sore to come. But no. 740
And then she prayed him that he would forgive,
Madam, her breaking of the truth to you.
Dear madam, he was angry, yet we think
He might have let her see, before she died,
The words she wanted, but he did not write
Till she was gone—"I neither can forgive,
Nor would I if I could."'

'Patience, my heart !

And this, then, is the man I loved !'

But yet

He sought a lower level, for he wrote
Telling the story with a different hue, 750
Telling of freedom. He desired to come,
'For now,' said he, 'O love, may all be well.'
And she rose up against it in her soul,
For she despised him. And with passionate tears
Of shame, she wrote, and only wrote these words—
'Herbert, I will not see you.'

Then she drooped

Again ; it is so bitter to despise ;
And all her strength, when autumn leaves down dropped,
Fell from her. 'Ah !' she thought, 'I rose up once,
I cannot rise up now ; here is the end.' 760
And all her kinsfolk thought, 'It is the end.'

But when that other heard, 'It is the end,'
His heart was sick, and he, as by a power
Far stronger than himself, was driven to her.
Reason rebelled against it, but his will
Required it of him with a craving strong
As life, and passionate though hopeless pain.

She, when she saw his face, considered him
Full quietly, let all excuses pass
Not answered, and considered yet again. 770

' He had heard that she was sick ; what could he do
But come, and ask her pardon that he came ? '
What could he do, indeed ?—a weak white girl
Held all his heartstrings in her small white hand ;
His youth, and power, and majesty were hers,
And not his own.

She looked, and pitied him,
Then spoke : ' He loves me with a love that lasts.
Ah, me ! that I might get away from it,
Or, better, hear it said that love is NOT,
And then I could have rest. My time is short, 780
I think, so short.' And roused against himself
In stormy wrath, that it should be his doom
Her to disquiet whom he loved ; aye, her
For whom he would have given all his rest,
If there were any left to give ; he took
Her words up bravely, promising once more
Absence, and praying pardon ; but some tears
Dropped quietly upon her cheek.

' Remain,'
She said, ' for there is something to be told,
Some words that you must hear.

And first hear this : 790
God has been good to me ; you must not think
That I despair. There is a quiet time
Like evening in my soul. I have no heart,
For cruel Herbert killed it long ago,
And death strides on. Sit, then, and give your mind
To listen, and your eyes to look at me.
Look at my face, Laurance, how white it is ;
Look at my hand—my beauty is all gone.'
And Laurance lifted up his eyes ; he looked,
But answered, from their deeps that held no doubt,
Far otherwise than she had willed—they said, 801
' Lovelier than ever.'

Yet her words went on,
Cold and so quiet, ' I have suffered much,
And I would fain that none who care for me
Should suffer a like pang that I can spare.
Therefore,' said she, and not at all could blush,
' I have brought my mind of late to think of this :
That since your life is spoilt (not willingly,

My God, not willingly by me), 't were well
To give you choice of griefs.

Were it not best 810

To weep for a dead love, and afterwards
Be comforted the sooner, that she died
Remote, and left not in your house and life
Aught to remind you ? That indeed were best.
But were it best to weep for a dead wife,
And let the sorrow spend and satisfy
Itself with all expression, and so end ?
I think not so ; but if for you 't is best,
Then—do not answer with too sudden words :
It matters much to you ; not much, not much 820
To me,—then truly I will die your wife ;
I will marry you.'

What was he like to say,
But, overcome with love and tears, to choose
The keener sorrow,—take it to his heart,
Cherish it, make it part of him, and watch
Those eyes that were his light till they should close ?

He answered her with eager, faltering words,
' I choose—my heart is yours—die in my arms.'

But was it well ? Truly, at first, for him
It was not well : he saw her fade, and cried, 830
' When may this be ? ' She answered, ' When you will,'
And cared not much, for very faint she grew,
Tired and cold. Oft in her soul she thought,
' If I could slip away before the ring
Is on my hand, it were a blessed lot
For both,—a blessed thing for him, and me.'

But it was not so ; for the day had come—
Was over : days and months had come, and Death—
Within whose shadow she had lain, which made
Earth and its loves, and even its bitterness, 840
Indifferent,—Death withdrew himself, and life
Woke up, and found that it was folded fast,
Drawn to another life for evermore.
O, what a waking ! After it there came
Great silence. She got up once more, in spring,

And walked, but not alone, among the flowers.
She thought within herself, 'What have I done ?
How shall I do the rest ?' And he, who felt
Her inmost thought, was silent even as she.
'What have we done ?' she thought. But as for him,
When she began to look him in the face, 851
Considering, 'Thus and thus his features are,'
For she had never thought on them before,
She read their grave repose aright. She knew
That in the stronghold of his heart, held back,
Hidden reserves of measureless content
Kept house with happy thought, for her sake mute.

Most patient Muriel ! when he brought her home,
She took the place they gave her,—strove to please
His kin, and did not fail ; but yet thought on, 860
'What have I done ? how shall I do the rest ?
Ah ! so contented, Laurance, with this wife
That loves you not, for all the stateliness
And grandeur of your manhood, and the deeps
In your blue eyes.' And after that awhile
She rested from such thinking, put it by
And waited. She had thought on death before :
But no, this Muriel was not yet to die ;
And when she saw her little tender babe,
She felt how much the happy days of life 870
Outweigh the sorrowful. A tiny thing,
Whom when it slept the lovely mother nursed
With reverent love, whom when it woke she fed
And wondered at, and lost herself in long
Rapture of watching, and contentment deep.

Once while she sat, this babe upon her knee,
Her husband and his father standing nigh,
About to ride ; the grandmother, all pride
And consequence, so deep in learned talk
Of infants, and their little ways and wiles, 880
Broke off to say, 'I never saw a babe
So like its father.' And the thought was new
To Muriel ; she looked up, and when she looked,
Her husband smiled. And she, the lovely bloom
Flushing her face, would fain he had not known,
Nor noticed her surprise. But he did know ;

Yet there was pleasure in his smile, and love
 Tender and strong. He kissed her, kissed his babe,
 With 'Goody, you are left in charge, take care'—
 'As if I needed telling,' quoth the dame ; 890
 And they were gone.

Then Muriel, lost in thought,
 Gazed ; and the grandmother, with open pride,
 Tended the lovely pair ; till Muriel said,
 'Is she so like ? Dear granny, get me now
 The picture that his father has ;' and soon
 The old woman put it in her hand.

The wife,
 Considering it with deep and strange delight,
 Forgot for once her babe, and looked and learned.

A mouth for mastery and manful work,
 A certain brooding sweetness in the eyes, 900
 A brow the harbour of grave thought, and hair
 Saxon of hue. She conned ; then blushed again,
 Remembering now, when she had looked on him,
 The sudden radiance of her husband's smile.

But Muriel did not send the picture back ;
 She kept it ; while her beauty and her babe
 Flourished together, and in health and peace
 She lived.

Her husband never said to her,
 'Love, are you happy ?' never said to her,
 'Sweet, do you love me ?' and at first, whene'er 910
 They rode together in the lanes, and paused,
 Stopping their horses, when the day was hot,
 In the shadow of a tree, to watch the clouds,
 Ruffled in drifting on the jagged rocks
 That topped the mountains,—when she sat by him,
 Withdrawn at even while the summer stars
 Came starting out of nothing, as new made,
 She felt a little trouble, and a wish
 That he would yet keep silence, and he did.
 That one reserve he would not touch, but still 920
 Respected.

Muriel grew more brave in time,
 And talked at ease, and felt disquietude
 Fade. And another child was given to her.

'Now we shall do,' the old great-grandsire cried,
 'For this is the right sort, a boy.' 'Fie, fie,'
 Quoth the good dame; 'but never heed you, love,
 He thinks them both as right as right can be.'

But Laurance went from home, ere yet the boy
 Was three weeks old. It fretted him to go,
 But still he said, 'I must': and she was left 930
 Much with the kindly dame, whose gentle care
 Was like a mother's; and the two could talk
 Sweetly, for all the difference in their years.

But unaware, the wife betrayed a wish
 That she had known why Laurance left her thus.
 'Aye, love,' the dame made answer; 'for he said,
 "Goody," before he left, "if Muriel ask
 No question, tell her nought; but if she let
 Any disquietude appear to you,
 Say what you know."' 'What?' Muriel said, and 940
 laughed,
 'I ask, then.'

'Child, it is that your old love,
 Some two months past, was here. Nay, never start:
 He's gone. He came, our Laurance met him near;
 He said that he was going over seas,
 "And might I see your wife this only once,
 And get her pardon?"'

'Mercy!' Muriel cried,
 'But Laurance does not wish it?'
 'Nay, now, nay,'
 Quoth the good dame.

'I cannot,' Muriel cried;
 'He does not, surely, think I should.'

'Not he,'
 The kind old woman said, right soothingly. 950
 'Does not he ever know, love, ever do
 What you like best?'

And Muriel, trembling yet,
 Agreed. 'I heard him say,' the dame went on,
 'For I was with him when they met that day,
 "It would not be agreeable to my wife."'

Then Muriel, pondering,—‘ And he said no more ?
 You think he did not add, “ nor to myself ” ? ’
 And with her soft, calm, inward voice, the dame
 Unruffled answered, ‘ No, sweet heart, not he :
 What need he care ? ’ ‘ And why not ? ’ Muriel cried,
 Longing to hear the answer. ‘ Oh, he knows, 961
 He knows, love, very well : ’ with that she smiled.
 ‘ Bless your fair face, you have not really thought
 He did not know you loved him ? ’

Muriel said,
 ‘ He never told me, goody, that he knew.’
 ‘ Well,’ quoth the dame, ‘ but it may chance, my dear,
 That he thinks best to let old troubles sleep :
 Why need he rouse them ? You are happy, sure ?
 But if one asks, “ Art happy ? ” why, it sets
 The thoughts a-working. No, say I, let love, 970
 Let peace and happy folk alone.

‘ He said,
 “ It would not be agreeable to my wife.”
 And he went on to add ; in course of time
 That he would ask you, when it suited you,
 To write a few kind words.’

‘ Yes,’ Muriel said,
 ‘ I can do that.’

‘ So Laurance went, you see,’
 The soft voice added, ‘ to take down that child.
 Laurance had written oft about the child,
 And now, at last, the father made it known .
 He could not take him. He has lost, they say, 980
 His money, with much gambling ; now he wants
 To lead a good, true, working life. He wrote,
 And let this so be seen, that Laurance went
 And took the child, and took the money down
 To pay.’

And Muriel found her talking sweet,
 And asked once more, the rather that she longed
 To speak again of Laurance, ‘ And you think
 He knows I love him ? ’

‘ Aye, good sooth, he knows :
 No fear ; but he is like his father, love.
 His father never asked my pretty child 990
 One prying question ; took her as she was ;

Trusted her ; she has told me so : he knew
 A woman's nature. Laurance is the same.
 He knows you love him ; but he will not speak ;
 No, never. Some men are such gentlemen !'

SONGS OF THE NIGHT WATCHES,

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY SONG OF EVENING, AND A CONCLUDING SONG
 OF THE EARLY DAY

INTRODUCTORY

(Old English Manner)

APPRENTICED

'COME out and hear the waters shoot, the owlet hoot, the
 owlet hoot ;
 Yon crescent moon, a golden boat, hangs dim behind
 the tree, O !
 The dropping thorn makes white the grass, O sweetest
 lass, and sweetest lass ;
 Come out and smell the ricks of hay adown the croft
 with me, O !'

' My granny nods before her wheel, and drops her reel,
 and drops her reel ;
 My father with his crony talks as gay as gay can be, O !
 But all the milk is yet to skim, ere light wax dim, ere
 light wax dim ;
 How can I step adown the croft, my 'prentice lad,
 with thee, O ?'

And must ye bide, yet waiting's long, and love is strong,
 and love is strong ;
 And O ! had I but served the time, that takes so long
 to flee, O !
 And thou, my lass, by morning's light wast all in white,
 wast all in white,
 And parson stood within the rails, a-marrying me and
 thee, O.'

THE FIRST WATCH

TIRED

I

O, I WOULD tell you more, but I am tired ;
For I have longed, and I have had my will ;
I pleaded in my spirit, I desired :
' Ah ! let me only see him, and be still
All my days after.'

Rock, and rock, and rock,
Over the falling, rising watery world,
Sail, beautiful ship, along the leaping main ;
The chirping land-birds follow flock on flock
To light on a warmer plain.
White as weaned lambs the little wavelets curled, 10
Fall over in harmless play,
As these do far away ;
Sail, bird of doom, along the shimmering sea,
All under thy broad wings that overshadow thee.

II

I am so tired,

If I would comfort me, I know not how,
For I have seen thee, lad, as I desired,
And I have nothing left to long for now.

Nothing at all. And did I wait for thee,
Often and often, while the light grew dim, 20
And through the lilac branches I could see,
Under a saffron sky, the purple rim
O' the heaving moorland ? Aye. And then would float
Up from behind as it were a golden boat,
Freighted with fancies, all o' the wonder of life,
Love—such a slender moon, going up and up,
Waxing so fast from night to night,
And swelling like an orange flower-bud, bright,
Fated, methought, to round as to a golden cup,
And hold to my two lips life's best of wine. 30
Most beautiful crescent moon,
Ship of the sky !
Across the unfurrowed reaches sailing high.

Methought that it would come my way full soon,
 Laden with blessings that were all, all mine—
 A golden ship, with balm and spiceries rife,
 That ere its day was done should hear thee call me wife.

III

All over ! the celestial sign hath failed ;
 The orange flower-bud shuts ; the ship hath sailed,
 And sunk behind the long low-lying hills. 40
 The love that fed on daily kisses dieth :
 The love kept warm by nearness lieth,
 Wounded and wan ;
 The love hope nourished bitter tears distils,
 And faints with nought to feed upon.
 Only there stirreth very deep below
 The hidden beating slow,
 And the blind yearning, and the long-drawn breath
 Of the love that conquers death.

IV

Had we not loved full long, and lost all fear, 50
 My ever, my only dear ?
 Yes ; and I saw thee start upon thy way,
 So sure that we should meet
 Upon our trysting-day.
 And even absence then to me was sweet,
 Because it brought me time to brood
 Upon thy dearness in the solitude.
 But ah ! to stay, and stay,
 And let that moon of April wane itself away,
 And let the lovely May 60
 Make ready all her buds for June ;
 And let the glossy finch forgo her tune
 That she brought with her in the spring,
 And never more, I think, to me can sing ;
 And then to lead thee home another bride,
 In the sultry summertide,
 And all forget me save for shame full sore,
 That made thee pray me, absent, ' See my face no more.'

V

O, hard, most hard ! But while my fretted heart
 Shut out, shut down, and full of pain, 70
 Sobbed to itself apart,
 Ached to itself in vain,
 One came who loveth me
 As I love thee. . . .

And let my God remember him for this
 As I do hope He will forget thy kiss,
 Nor visit on thy stately head
 Aught that thy mouth hath sworn, or thy two eyes
 have said. . . .

He came, and it was dark. He came, and sighed
 Because he knew the sorrow,—whispering low, 80
 And fast, and thick, as one that speaks by rote :
 ‘ The vessel lieth in the river reach,
 A mile above the beach,
 And she will sail at the turning o’ the tide.’
 He said, ‘ I have a boat,
 And were it good to go,
 And unbeholden in the vessel’s wake
 Look on the man thou lovedst, and forgive,
 As he embarks, a shamefaced fugitive.
 Come, then, with me.’ 90

VI

O, how he sighed ! The little stars did wink,
 And it was very dark. I gave my hand,—
 He led me out across the pasture land,
 And through the narrow croft,
 Down to the river’s brink.
 When thou wast full in spring, thou little sleepy thing,
 The yellow flags that broider’d thee would stand
 Up to their chins in water, and full oft
 We pulled them and the other shining flowers,
 That all are gone to-day : 100
 WE two, that had so many things to say,
 So many hopes to render clear :
 And they are all gone after thee, my dear,—
 Gone after those sweet hours,
 That tender light, that balmy rain ;
 Gone ‘ as a wind that passeth away,
 And cometh not again ’.

VII

I only saw the stars,—I could not see
 The river,—and they seemed to lie
 As far below as the other stars were high. 110
 I trembled like a thing about to die :
 It was so awful 'neath the majesty
 Of that great crystal height, that overhung
 The blackness at our feet,
 Unseen to fleet and fleet
 The flocking stars among,
 And only hear the dipping of the oar,
 And the small wave's caressing of the darksome shore.

VIII

Less real it was than any dream.
 Ah me ! to hear the bending willows shiver, 120
 As we shot quickly from the silent river,
 And felt the swaying and the flow
 That bore us down the deeper, wider stream,
 Whereto its nameless waters go :
 O ! I shall always, when I shut mine eyes,
 See that weird sight again ;
 The lights from anchor'd vessels hung ;
 The phantom moon, that sprung
 Suddenly up in dim and angry wise, 130
 From the rim o' the moaning main,
 And touched with elfin light
 The two long oars whereby we made our flight,
 Along the reaches of the night ;
 Then furrow'd up a lowering cloud,
 Went in, and left us darker than before,
 To feel our way as the midnight watches wore,
 And lie in HER lee, with mournful faces bowed,
 That should receive and bear with her away
 The brightest portion of my sunniest day—
 The laughter of the land, the sweetness of the shore. 140

IX

And I beheld thee : saw the lantern flash
 Down on thy face, when thou didst climb the side.
 And thou wert pale, pale as the patient bride
 That followed : both a little sad,

Leaving of home and kin. Thy courage glad,
 That once did bear thee on,
 That brow of thine had lost ; the fervour rash
 Of unforeboding youth thou hadst forgone.
 O, what a little moment, what a crumb
 Of comfort for a heart to feed upon ! 150
 And that was all its sum :
 A glimpse, and not a meeting—
 A drawing near by night,
 To sigh to thee an unacknowledged greeting,
 And all between the flashing of a light
 And its retreating.

X

Then after, ere she spread her wafting wings,
 The ship—and weighed her anchor to depart,
 We stole from her dark lee, like guilty things ;
 And there was silence in my heart, 160
 And silence in the upper and the nether deep.
 O sleep ! O sleep !
 Do not forget me. Sometimes come and sweep,
 Now I have nothing left, thy healing hand
 Over the lids that crave thy visits bland,
 Thou kind, thou comforting one :
 For I have seen his face, as I desired,
 And all my story is done.
 O, I am tired ! 169

THE MIDDLE WATCH

I

I WOKE in the night, and the darkness was heavy and
 deep ;
 I had known it was dark in my sleep,
 And I rose and looked out,
 And the fathomless vault was all sparkling, set thick
 round about
 With the ancient inhabitants silent, and wheeling too far
 For man's heart, like a voyaging frigate, to sail, where
 remote

In the sheen of their glory they float,
Or man's soul, like a bird, to fly near, of their beams
to partake,

And dazed in their wake,

Drink day that is born of a star.

10

I murmured, 'Remoteness and greatness, how deep you
are set,

How afar in the rim of the whole ;

You know nothing of me, or of man, nor of earth, O, nor yet

Of our light-bearer—drawing the marvellous moons
as they roll,

Of our regent, the sun.

I look on you trembling, and think, in the dark with
my soul,

"How small is our place 'mid the kingdoms and nations
of God :

These are greater than we, every one."'

And there falls a great fear, and a dread cometh over,
that cries,

'O my hope ! Is there any mistake ?

20

Did He speak ? Did I hear ? Did I listen aright, if He
spake ?

Did I answer Him duly ? For surely I now am awake,
If never I woke until now.'

And a light, baffling wind, that leads nowhither, plays
on my brow.

As a sleep, I must think on my day, of my path as untrod,
Or trodden in dreams, in a dreamland whose coasts are
a doubt ;

Whose countries recede from my thoughts, as they grope
round about,

And vanish, and tell me not how.

Be kind to our darkness, O Fashioner, dwelling in light,

And feeding the lamps of the sky ;

30

Look down upon this one, and let it be sweet in Thy sight,

I pray Thee, to-night.

O watch whom Thou madest to dwell on its soil, Thou

Most High !

For this is a world full of sorrow (there may be but one) ;

Keep watch o'er its dust, else Thy children for ay are
undone,

For this is a world where we die.

II

With that, a still voice in my spirit that moved and
that yearned

(There fell a great calm while it spake),

I had heard it erewhile, but the noises of life are so loud,
That sometimes it dies in the cry of the street and the
crowd : 40

To the simple it cometh,—the child, or asleep, or awake,
And they know not from whence ; of its nature the wise
never learned

By his wisdom ; its secret the worker ne'er earned
By his toil ; and the rich among men never bought
with his gold ;

Nor the times of its visiting monarchs controlled,

Nor the jester put down with his jeers

(For it moves where it will), nor its season the aged
discerned

By thought, in the ripeness of years.

O elder than reason, and stronger than will !

A voice, when the dark world is still : 50

Whence cometh it ? Father Immortal, thou knowest !
and we—

We are sure of that witness, that sense which is sent us
of Thee ;

For it moves, and it yearns in its fellowship mighty and
dread,

And let down to our hearts it is touched by the tears
that we shed ;

It is more than all meanings, and over all strife ;

On its tongue are the laws of our life,

And it counts up the times of the dead.

III

I will fear you, O stars, never more.

I have felt it ! Go on, while the world is asleep,

Golden islands, fast moored in God's infinite deep. 60

Hark, hark to the words of sweet fashion, the harplings
of yore !

How they sang to Him, seer and saint, in the far away
lands :

' The heavens are the work of Thy hands ;

They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure ;

Yea, they all shall wax old—

But Thy throne is established, O God, and Thy years
are made sure ;

They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure—

They shall pass like a tale that is told.’

Doth He answer, the Ancient of Days ?

Will He speak in the tongue and the fashion of
men ? 70

‘Hist ! hist ! while the heaven-hung multitudes shine
in His praise,

His language of old). Nay, He spoke with them first ;
it was then

They lifted their eyes to His throne :

‘They shall call on Me, “Thou art our Father, our God,
Thou alone !”

For I made them, I led them in deserts and desolate ways ;

I have found them a Ransom Divine ;

I have loved them with love everlasting, the children of
men ;

I swear by Myself, they are Mine.’

78

THE MORNING WATCH

THE COMING IN OF THE ‘MERMAIDEN’

THE moon is bleached as white as wool,

And just dropping under ;

Every star is gone but three,

And they hang far asunder—

There ’s a sea-ghost all in grey,

A tall shape of wonder !

I am not satisfied with sleep,—

The night is not ended.

But look how the sea-ghost comes,

With wan skirts extended,

Stealing up in this weird hour,

When light and dark are blended.

A vessel ! To the old pier end
Her happy course she 's keeping ;
I heard them name her yesterday :
Some were pale with weeping ;
Some with their heart-hunger sighed,
She 's in—and they are sleeping.

O ! now with fancied greetings blest,
They comfort their long aching :
The sea of sleep hath borne to them
What would not come with waking,
And the dreams shall most be true
In their blissful breaking.

The stars are gone, the rose-bloom comes—
No blush of maid is sweeter ;
The red sun, half-way out of bed,
Shall be the first to greet her.
None tell the news, yet sleepers wake,
And rise, and run to meet her.

Their lost they have, they hold ; from pain
A keener bliss they borrow.
How natural is joy, my heart !
How easy after sorrow !
For once, the best is come that hope
Promised them ' to-morrow '.

CONCLUDING SONG OF DAWN

(Old English Manner)

A MORN OF MAY

ALL the clouds about the sun lay up in golden creases
(Merry rings the maiden's voice that sings at dawn of
day) ;
Lambkins woke and skipped around to dry their dewy
fleeces,
So sweetly as she carolled, all on a morn of May.

Quoth the Sergeant, ' Here I 'll halt ; here 's wine of
 joy for drinking ;
 To my heart she sets her hand, and in the strings doth
 play ;
 All among the daffodils, and fairer to my thinking,
 And fresh as milk and roses, she sits this morn of May.'

Quoth the Sergeant, ' Work is work, but any ye might
 make me,
 If I worked for you, dear lass, I'd count my holiday.
 I 'm your slave for good and all, an' if ye will but take me,
 So sweetly as ye carol upon this morn of May.'

' Medals count for worth,' quoth she, ' and scars are worn
 for honour ;
 But a slave an' if ye be, kind wooer, go your way.'
 All the nodding daffodils woke up and laughed upon her.
 O ! sweetly did she carol, all on that morn of May.

Gladsome leaves upon the bough, they fluttered fast and
 faster,
 Fretting brook, till he would speak, did chide the dull
 delay :
 ' Beauty ! when I said a slave, I think I meant a master ;
 So sweetly as ye carol all on this morn of May.

' Lass, I love you ! Love is strong, and some men's
 hearts are tender.'
 Far she sought o'er wood and wold, but found not aught
 to say ;
 Mounting lark nor mantling cloud would any counsel
 render,
 Though sweetly she had carolled upon that morn of May.

Shy, she sought the wooer's face, and deemed the wooing
 mended ;
 Proper man he was, good sooth, and one would have
 his way :
 So the lass was made a wife, and so the song was ended.
 O ! sweetly she did carol all on that morn of May.

A STORY OF DOOM

BOOK I

NILOIYA said to Noah, 'What aileth thee,
My master, unto whom is my desire,
The father of my sons?' He answered her,
'Mother of many children, I have heard
The Voice again.' 'Ah, me!' she saith, 'ah, me!
What spake it?' and with that Niloiya sighed.

This when the Master-builder heard, his heart
Was sad in him, the while he sat at home
And rested after toil. The steady rap
O' the shipwright's hammer sounding up the vale 10
Did seem to mock him; but her distaff down
Niloiya laid, and to the doorplace went,
Parted the purple covering seemly hung
Before it, and let in the crimson light
Of the descending sun. Then looked he forth,—
Looked, and beheld the hollow where the ark
Was a-preparing; where the dew distilled
All night from leaves of old lign aloe trees,
Upon the gliding river; where the palm,
The almug, and the gophir shot their heads 20
Into the crimson brede that dyed the world:
And lo! he marked—unwieldy, dark, and huge—
The ship, his glory and his grief,—too vast
For that still river's floating,—building far
From mightier streams, amid the pastoral dells
Of shepherd kings.

 Niloiya spake again:

'What said the Voice, thou well-belovèd man?'
He, labouring with his thought that troubled him,
Spoke on behalf of God: 'Behold,' said he,
'A little handful of unlovely dust 30
He fashioned to a lordly grace, and when
He laughed upon its beauty, it waxed warm,
And with His breath awoke a living soul.

‘ Shall not the Fashioner command His work ?
 And who am I, that, if He whisper, ‘ Rise,
 Go forth upon Mine errand,’ should reply,
 “ Lord God, I love the woman and her sons,—
 I love not scorning : I beseech Thee, God,
 Have me excused.” ’

She answered him, ‘ Tell on.

And he continuing, reasoned with his soul : 40
 ‘ What though I—like some goodly llama sunk
 In meadow grass, eating her way at ease,
 Unseen of them that pass, and asking not
 A wider prospect than of yellow-flowers
 That nod above her head—should lay me down,
 And willingly forget this high behest,
 There should be yet no tarrying. Furthermore,
 Though I went forth to cry against the doom,
 Earth crieth louder, and she draws it down :
 It hangeth balanced over us ; she crieth, 50
 And it shall fall. O ! as for me, my life
 Is bitter, looking onward, for I know
 That in the fullness of the time shall dawn
 That day : my preaching shall not bring forth fruit,
 Though for its sake I leave thee. I shall float
 Upon the abhorred sea, that mankind hate,
 With thee and thine.’

She answered : ‘ God forbid !

For, sir, though men be evil, yet the deep
 They dread, and at the last will surely turn
 To Him, and He long-suffering will forgive, 60
 And chide the waters back to their abyss,
 To cover the pits where doleful creatures feed.
 Sir, I am much afraid : I would not hear
 Of riding on the waters : look you, sir,
 Better it were to die with you by hand
 Of them that hate us, than to live, ah me !
 Rolling among the furrows of the unquiet,
 Unconsecrate, unfriendly, dreadful sea.’

He saith again : ‘ I pray thee, woman, peace,
 For thou wilt enter, when that day appears, 70
 The fateful ship.’

‘ My lord,’ quoth she, ‘ I will.

But O, good sir, be sure of this, be sure
 The Master calleth ; for the time is long
 That thou hast warned the world : thou art but here
 Three days ; the song of welcoming but now
 Is ended. I behold thee, I am glad ;
 And wilt thou go again ? Husband, I say,
 Be sure who 'tis that calleth ; O, be sure,
 Be sure. My mother's ghost came up last night,
 Whilst I thy beard, held in my hands, did kiss, 80
 Leaning anear thee, wakeful through my love,
 And watchful of thee till the moon went down.

' She never loved me since I went with thee
 To sacrifice among the hills : she smelt
 The holy smoke, and could no more divine
 Till the new moon. I saw her ghost come up ;
 It had a snake with a red comb of fire
 Twisted about its waist—the doggish head
 Lolloped on its shoulder, and so leered at me.
 " This woman might be wiser," quoth the ghost ; 90
 " Shall there be husbands for her found below,
 When she comes down to us ? O, fool ! O, fool !
 She must not let her man go forth, to leave
 Her desolate, and reap the whole world's scorn,
 A harvest for himself." With that they passed.'

He said, ' My crystal drop of perfectness,
 I pity thee ; it was an evil ghost :
 Thou wilt not heed the counsel ? ' ' I will not,'
 Quoth she ; ' I am loyal to the Highest. Him
 I hold by even as thou, and deem Him best. 100
 Sir, am I fairer than when last we met ? '

' God add,' said he, ' unto thy much yet more,
 As I do think thou art.' ' And think you, sir,'
 Niloiya saith, ' that I have reached the prime ? '
 He answering, ' Nay, not yet.' ' I would 'twere so,'
 She plaineth, ' for the daughters mock at me :
 Her locks forbear to grow, they say, so sore
 She pineth for the master. Look you, sir,
 They reach but to the knee. But thou art come,
 And all goes merrier. Eat, my lord, of all 110

My supper that I set, and afterward
 Tell me, I pray thee, somewhat of thy way ;
 Else shall I be despised as Adam was,
 Who compassed not the learning of his sons,
 But, grave and silent, oft would lower his head
 And ponder, following of great Isha's feet,
 When she would walk with her fair brow upraised,
 Scorning the children that she bare to him.'

'Aye,' quoth the Master ; ' but they did amiss
 When they despised their father : knowest thou that ? '

'Sure he was foolisher,' Niloiya saith, 121
 'Than any that came after. Furthermore,
 He had not heart nor courage for to rule :
 He let the mastery fall from his slack hand.
 Had not our glorious mother still borne up
 His weakness, chid with him, and sat apart,
 And listened, when the fit came over him
 To talk on his lost garden, he had sunk
 Into the slave of slaves.'

'Nay, thou must think

How he had dwelt long, God's loved husbandman, 130
 And looked in hope among the tribes for one
 To be his fellow, ere great Isha, once
 Waking, he found at his left side, and knew
 The deep delight of speech.' So Noah, and thus
 Added, 'And therefore was his loss the more ;
 For though the creatures he had singled out
 His favourites, dared for him the fiery sword
 And followed after him,—shall bleat of lamb
 Console one for the forgone talk of God ?
 Or in the afternoon, his faithful dog, 140
 Fawning upon him, make his heart forget
 At such a time, and such a time, to have heard
 What he shall hear no more ?

'O, as for him,

It was for this that he full oft would stop,
 And, lost in thought, stand and revolve that deed,
 Sad muttering, "Woman ! we reproach thee not ;
 Though thou didst eat mine immortality ;
 Earth, be not sorry ; I was free to choose."

Wonder not, therefore, if he walked forlorn.
 Was not the helpmeet given to raise him up 150
 From his contentment with the lower things ?
 Was she not somewhat that he could not rule
 Beyond the action, that he could not have
 By the mere holding, and that still aspired
 And drew him after her ? So, when deceived
 She fell by great desire to rise, he fell
 By loss of upward drawing, when she took
 An evil tongue to be her counsellor :
 " Death is not as the death of lower things,
 Rather a glorious change, begrudged of Heaven, 160
 A change to being as gods "—he from her hand,
 Upon reflection, took of death that hour,
 And ate it (not the death that she had dared) ;
 He ate it knowing. Then divisions came.
 She, like a spirit strayed who lost the way,
 Too venturesome, among the further stars,
 And hardly cares, because it hardly hopes
 To find the path to heaven ; in bitter wise
 Did bear to him degenerate seed, and he,
 Once having felt her upward drawing, longed, 170
 And yet aspired, and yearned to be restored,
 Albeit she drew no more.'

' Sir, ye speak well,'

Niloiya saith, ' but yet the mother sits
 Higher than Adam. He did understand
 Discourse of birds and all four-footed things,
 But she had knowledge of the many tribes
 Of angels and their tongues ; their playful ways
 And greetings when they met. Was she not wise ?
 They say she knew much that she never told,
 And had a voice that called to her as thou.' 180

' Nay,' quoth the Master-shipwright, ' who am I
 That I should answer ? As for me, poor man,
 Here is my trouble : " if there be a Voice,"
 At first I cried, " let me behold the mouth
 That uttereth it." Thereon it held its peace.
 But afterward, I, journeying up the hills,
 Did hear it hollower than an echo fallen
 Across some clear abyss ; and I did stop,

And ask of all my company, "What cheer ?
 If there be spirits abroad that call to us, 190
 Sirs, hold your peace and hear." So they gave heed,
 And one man said, "It is the small ground-doves
 That peck upon the stony hillocks ;" one,
 "It is the mammoth in yon cedar swamp
 That cheweth in his dream ;" and one, "My lord,
 It is the ghost of him that yesternight
 We slew, because he grudged to yield his wife
 To thy great father, when he peaceably
 Did send to take her." Then I answered, "Pass,"
 And they went on ; and I did lay mine ear 200
 Close to the earth ; but there came up therefrom
 No sound, nor any speech ; I waited long,
 And in the saying, "I will mount my beast
 And on," I was as one that in a trance
 Beholdeth what is coming, and I saw
 Great waters and a ship ; and somewhat spake,
 "Lo, this shall be ; let him that heareth it,
 And seeth it, go forth to warn his kind,
 For I will drown the world."'

Niloiya saith,

'Sir, was that all that ye went forth upon ?' 210
 The master, he replieth, 'Aye,' at first,
 'That same was all ; but many days went by,
 While I did reason with my heart and hope
 For more, and struggle to remain, and think,
 "Let me be certain ;" and so think again,
 "The counsel is but dark ; would I had more !
 When I have more to guide me, I will go."
 And afterward, when reasoned on too much,
 It seemed remoter, then I only said,
 "O, would I had the same again ;" and still 220
 I had it not.

Then at the last I cried,
 "If the unseen be silent, I will speak
 And certify my meaning to myself.
 Say that He spoke, then He will make that good
 Which He hath spoken. Therefore it were best
 To go, and do His bidding. All the earth
 Shall hear the judgement so, and none may cry
 When the doom falls, 'Thou, God, art hard on us ;

We knew not Thou wert angry. O ! we are lost,
Only for lack of being warned.'

But say 230
That He spoke not, and merely it befell
That I being weary had a dream. Why, so
He could not suffer damage ; when the time
Was past, and that I threatened had not come,
Men would cry out on me, haply me kill,
For troubling their content. They would not swear,
' God, that did send this man, is proved untrue,'
But rather, ' Let him die ; he lied to us ;
God never sent him.' Only Thou, great King,
Knowest if Thou didst speak or no. I leave 240
The matter here. If Thou wilt speak again,
I go in gladness ; if Thou wilt not speak,
Nay, if Thou never didst, I not the less
Shall go, because I have believed, what time
I seemed to hear Thee, and the going stands
With memory of believing." Then I washed,
And did array me in the sacred gown,
And take a lamb.'

' Aye, sir,' Niloiya sighed,
' I following, and I knew not anything
Till, the young lamb asleep in thy two arms, 250
We, moving up among the silent hills,
Paused in a grove to rest ; and many slaves
Came near to make obeisance, and to bring
Wood for the sacrifice, and turf and fire.
Then in their hearing thou didst say to me,
" Behold, I know thy good fidelity,
And theirs that are about us ; they would guard
The mountain passes, if it were my will
Awhile to leave thee ; " and the pigmies laughed
For joy, that thou wouldst trust inferior things ; 260
And put their heads down, as their manner is,
To touch our feet. They laughed, but sore I wept ;
Sir, I could weep now ; ye did ill to go
If that was all your bidding ; I had thought
God drave thee, and thou couldst not choose but go.'

Then said the son of Lamech, ' Afterward,
When I had left thee, He whom I had served

Met with me in the visions of the night,
 To comfort me for that I had withdrawn
 From thy dear company. He sware to me 270
 That no man should molest thee, no, nor touch
 The bordering of mine outmost field. I say,
 When I obeyed, He made His matters plain.
 With whom could I have left thee, but with them ;
 Born in thy mother's house, and bound thy slaves ? '

She said, ' I love not pigmies ; they are naught.'
 And he, ' Who made them pigmies ? ' Then she pushed
 Her veiling hair back from her round, soft eyes,
 And answered, wondering, ' Sir, my mothers did ;
 Ye know it.' And he drew her near to sit 280
 Beside him on the settle, answering, ' Aye.'
 And they went on to talk as writ below,
 If any one shall read :

' Thy mother did,
 And they that went before her. Thinkest thou
 That they did well ? '

' They had been overcome ;
 And when the angered conquerors drave them out,
 Behoved them find some other way to rule,
 They did but use their wits. Hath not man ay
 Been cunning in dominion, among beasts
 To breed for size or swiftness, or for sake 290
 Of the white wool he loveth, at his choice ?
 What harm if coveting a race of men
 That could but serve, they sought among their thralls,
 Such as were low of stature, men and maids ;
 Aye, and of feeble will and quiet mind ?
 Did they not spend much gear to gather out
 Such as I tell of, and for matching them
 One with another for a thousand years ?
 What harm, then, if there came of it a race,
 Inferior in their wits, and in their size, 300
 And well content to serve ? '

' " What harm ? " thou sayest.
 My wife doth ask, " What harm ? " '

' Your pardon, sir.
 I do remember that there came one day,
 Two of the grave old angels that God made,

When first He invented life (right old they were,
 And plain, and venerable) ; and they said, .
 Rebuking of my mother as with hers
 She sat, " Ye do not well, you wives of men,
 To match your wit against the Maker's will,
 And for your benefit to lower the stamp 310
 Of His fair image, which He set at first
 Upon man's goodly frame ; ye do not well
 To treat His likeness even as ye treat
 The bird and beast that perish." "

‘ Said they aught
 To appease the ancients, or to speak them fair ? ’

‘ How know I ? ’Twas a slave that told it me.
 My mother was full old when I was born,
 And that was in her youth. What think you, sir ?
 Did not the giants likewise ill ? ’

‘ To that
 I have no answer ready. If a man, 320
 When each one is against his fellow, rule,
 Or unmolested dwell, or unreprieved,
 Because, for size and strength, he standeth first,
 He will thereof be glad ; and if he say,
 " I will to wife choose me a stately maid,
 And leave a goodly offspring ; " 'sooth, I think,
 He sinneth not ; for good to him and his
 He would be strong and great. Thy people's fault
 Was, that for ill to others, they did plot
 To make them weak and small.'

‘ But yet they steal
 Or take in war the strongest maids, and such 331
 As are of highest stature ; aye, and oft
 They fight among themselves for that same cause.
 And they are proud against the King of heaven :
 They hope in course of ages they shall come
 To be as strong as He.'

The Master said,
 ‘ I will not hear thee talk thereof ; my heart
 Is sick for all this wicked world. Fair wife,
 I am right weary. Call thy slaves to thee,
 And bid that they prepare the sleeping place. 340

O would that I might rest ! I fain would rest,
And no more, wandering, tell a thankless world
My never-heeded tale ! ’

With that she called.

The moon was up, and some few stars were out,
While heavy at the heart he walked abroad
To meditate before his sleep. And yet
Niloiya pondered, ‘ Shall my master go ?
And will my master go ? What ’vaileth it,
That he doth spend himself, over the waste
A-wandering, till he reach outlandish folk, 350
That mock his warning ? O, what ’vaileth it,
That he doth lavish wealth to build yon ark,
Whereat the daughters, when they eat with me,
Laugh ? O my heart ! I would the Voice were stilled.
Is not he happy ? Who, of all the earth,
Obeyeth like to me ? Have not I learned
From his dear mouth to utter seemly words,
And lay the powers my mother gave me by ?
Have I made offerings to the dragon ? Nay.
And I am faithful, when he leaveth me 360
Lonely betwixt the peakèd mountain tops
In this long valley, where no stranger foot
Can come without my will. He shall not go.
Not yet, not yet ! But three days—only three—
Beside me, and a-muttering on the third,
“ I have heard the Voice again.” Be dull, O dull,
Mind and remembrance ! Mother, ye did ill ;
’T is hard unlawful knowledge not to use.
Why, O dark mother ! opened ye the way ? ’
Yet when he entered, and did lay aside 370
His costly robe of sacrifice, the robe
Wherein he had been offering, ere the sun
Went down ; forgetful of her mother’s craft,
She lovely and submissive did mourn to him :
‘ Thou wilt not go—I pray thee, do not go,
Till thou hast seen thy children.’ And he said,
‘ I will not. I have cried, and have prevailed :
To-morrow it is given me by the Voice
Upon a four days’ journey to proceed,
And follow down the river, till its waves 380
Are swallowed in the sand, where no flesh dwells.

‘ “ There,” quoth the Unrevealed, “ we shall meet,
 And I will counsel thee ; and thou shalt turn
 And rest thee with the mother, and with them
 She bare.” Now, therefore, when the morn appears,
 Thou fairest among women, call thy slaves,
 And bid them yoke the steers, and spread thy car
 With robes, the choicest work of cunning hands ;
 Array thee in thy rich apparel, deck
 Thy locks with gold ; and while the hollow vale 390
 I thread beside yon river, go thou forth
 Atween the mountains to my father’s house,
 And let thy slaves make all obeisance due,
 And take and lay an offering at his feet.
 Then light, and cry to him, “ Great king, the son
 Of old Methuselah, thy son hath sent
 To fetch the growing maids, his children, home.” ’

‘ Sir,’ quoth the woman, ‘ I will do this thing,
 So thou keep faith with me, and yet return.
 But will the Voice, think you, forbear to chide, 400
 Nor that Unseen, who calleth, buffet thee,
 And drive thee on ? ’

He saith, ‘ It will keep faith.

Fear not. I have prevailed, for I besought,
 And lovingly it answered. I shall rest,
 And dwell with thee till after my three sons
 Come from the chase.’ She said, ‘ I let them forth
 In fear, for they are young. Their slaves are few.
 The giant elephants be cunning folk ;
 They lie in ambush, and will draw men on
 To follow—then will turn and tread them down.’ 410
 ‘ Thy father’s house unwisely planned,’ said he,
 ‘ To drive them down upon the growing corn
 Of them that were their foes ; for now, behold,
 They suffer while the unwieldy beasts delay
 Retirement to their lands, and, meanwhile, pound
 The damp, deep meadows, to a pulpy mash ;
 Or wallowing in the waters foul them ; nay,
 Tread down the banks, and let them forth to flood
 Their cities ; or, assailed and falling, shake
 The walls, and taint the wind, ere thirty men, 420

Over the hairy terror piling stones
Or earth, prevail to cover it.'

She said,
' Husband, I have been sorry, thinking oft
I would my sons were home ; but now so well
Methinks it is with me, that I am fain
To wish they might delay, for thou wilt dwell
With me till after they return, and thou
Hast set thine eyes upon them. Then—ah, me !
I must sit joyless in my place ; bereft,
As trees that suddenly have dropped their leaves, 430
And dark as nights that have no moon.'

She spake :
The hope o' the world did hearken, but reply
Made none. He left his hand on her fair locks
As she lay sobbing ; and the quietness
Of night began to comfort her, the fall
Of far-off waters, and the wingèd wind
That went among the trees. The patient hand,
Moreover, that was steady, wrought with her,
Until she said, ' What wilt thou ? Nay, I know.
I therefore answer what thou utterest not. 440
*Thou lovest me well, and not for thine own will
Consentest to depart. What more ? Aye, this :
I do avow that He which calleth thee,
Hath right to call ; and I do swear, the Voice
Shall have no let of me, to do Its will.'*

BOOK II

Now ere the sunrise, while the morning star
Hung yet behind the pine bough, woke and prayed
The world's great shipwright, and his soul was glad
Because the Voice was favourable. Now
Began the tap o' the hammer, now ran forth
The slaves preparing food. They therefore ate
In peace together ; then Niloiya forth
Behind the milk-white steers went on her way ;
And the great Master-builder, down the course
Of the long river, on his errand sped,
And as he went, he thought :

[They do not well]

Who, walking up a trodden path, all smooth
 With footsteps of their fellows, and made straight
 From town to town, will scorn at them that wonn
 Under the covert of God's eldest trees
 (Such as He planted with His hand, and fed
 With dew before rain fell, till they stood close
 And awful ; drank the light up as it dropt,
 And kept the dusk of ages at their roots) ;
 They do not well who mock at such, and cry, 20
 ' We peaceably, without or fault or fear,
 Proceed, and miss not of our end ; but these
 Are slow and fearful : with uncertain pace,
 And ever reasoning of the way, they oft,
 After all reasoning, choose the worsè course,
 And plunged in swamp, or in the matted growth
 Nigh smothered struggle, all to reach a goal
 Not worth their pains.' Nor do they well whose work
 Is still to feed and shelter them and theirs,
 Get gain, and gathered store it, to think scorn 30
 Of those who work for a world (no wages paid
 By a Master hid in light), and sent alone
 To face a laughing multitude, whose eyes
 Are full of damaging pity, that forbears
 To tell the harmless labourer, ' Thou art mad. ']

And as he went, he thought : ' They counsel me,
 Aye, with a kind of reason in their talk,
 " Consider ; call thy soberer thought to aid ;
 Why to but one man should a message come ?
 And why, if but to one, to thee ? Art thou 40
 Above us, greater, wiser ? Had He sent,
 He had willed that we should heed. Then since He
 knoweth
 That such as thou, a wise man cannot heed,
 He did not send." My answer, " Great and wise,
 If He had sent with thunder, and a voice
 Leaping from heaven, ye must have heard ; but so
 Ye had been robbed of choice, and, like the beasts,
 Yoked to obedience. God makes no men slaves."
 They tell me, " God is great above thy thought :
 He meddles not ; and this small world is ours, 50

These many hundred years we govern it ;
 Old Adam, after Eden, saw Him not."
 Then I, " It may be He is gone to knead
 More clay. But look, my masters ; one of you
 Going to warfare, layeth up his gown,
 His sickle, or his gold, and thinks no more
 Upon it, till young trees have waxen great ;
 At last, when he returneth he will seek
 His own. And God, shall He not do the like ?
 And having set new worlds a-rolling, come 60
 And say, ' I will betake Me to the earth
 That I did make : ' and having found it vile,
 Be sorry. Why should man be free, you wise,
 And not the Master ? " Then they answer, " Fool !
 A man shall cast a stone into the air
 For pastime, or for lack of heed,—but He !
 Will He come fingering of His ended work,
 Fright it with His approaching face, or snatch
 One day the rolling wonder from its ring,
 And hold it quivering, as a wanton child 70
 Might take a nestling from its downy bed,
 And having satisfied a careless wish,
 Go thrust it back into its place again ? "
 To such I answer, and, that doubt once mine,
 I am assured that I do speak aright :
 ' Sirs, the significance of this your doubt
 Lies in the reason of it ; ye do grudge
 That these your lands should have another Lord ;
 Ye are not loyal, therefore ye would fain
 Your King would bide afar. But if ye looked 80
 For countenance and favour when He came,
 Knowing yourselves right worthy, would ye care,
 With cautious reasoning, deep and hard, to prove
 That He would never come, and would your wrath
 Be hot against a prophet ? Nay, I wot
 That as a flatterer you would look on him,—
 ' Full of sweet words thy mouth is : if He come—
 We think not that He will—but if He come,
 Would it might be to-morrow, or to-night,
 Because we look for praise.' " "

Now, as he went, 90
 The noontide heats came on, and he grew faint ;

But while he sat below an almug tree,
 A slave approached with greeting. 'Master, hail !'
 He answered, 'Hail ! what wilt thou ?' Then she said,
 'The palace of thy fathers standeth nigh.'
 'I know it,' quoth he ; and she said again,
 'The Elder, learning thou wouldst pass, hath sent
 To fetch thee ;' then he rose and followed her.
 So first they walked beneath a lofty roof
 Of living bough and tendril, woven on high 100
 To let no drop of sunshine through, and hung
 With gold and purple fruitage, and the white
 Thick cups of scented blossom. Underneath,
 Soft grew the sward and delicate, and flocks
 Of egrets, aye, and many cranes, stood up,
 Fanning their wings, to agitate and cool
 The noonday air, as men with heed and pains
 Had taught them, marshalling and taming them
 To bear the wind in, on their moving wings.

So long time as a nimble slave would spend 110
 In milking of her cow, they walked at ease ;
 Then reached the palace, all of forest trunks,
 Brought whole, and set together, made. Therein
 Had dwelt old Adam, when his mighty sons
 Had finished it, and up to Eden gate
 Had journeyed for to fetch him. 'Here,' they said,
 'Mother and father, ye may dwell, and here
 Forget the garden wholly.'

So he came
 Under the doorplace, and the women sat,
 Each with her finger on her lips ; but he, 120
 Having been called, went on, until he reached
 The jewelled settle, wrought with cunning work
 Of gold and ivory, whereon they wont
 To set the Elder. All with sleekest skins,
 That striped and spotted creatures of the wood
 Had worn, the seat was covered, but thereon
 The Elder was not ; by the steps thereof,
 Upon the floor, whereto his silver beard
 Did reach, he sat, and he was in his trance.
 Upon the settle many doves were perched, 130
 That set the air a-going with their wings :

These opposite, the world's great shipwright stood
 To wait the burden ; and the Elder spake :
 ' Will He forget me ? Would He might forget !
 Old, old ! The hope of old Methuselah
 Is all in His forgetfulness.' With that,
 A slave-girl took a cup of wine, and crept
 Anear him, saying, ' Taste ; ' and when his lips
 Had touched it, lo, he trembled, and he cried,
 ' Behold, I prophesy.'

140

Then straight they fled
 That were about him, and did stand apart
 And stop their ears. For he, from time to time,
 Was plagued with that same fate to prophesy,
 And spake against himself, against his day
 And time, in words that all men did abhor.
 Therefore, he warning them what time the fit
 Came on him, saved them, that they heard it not.
 So while they fled, he cried : ' I saw the God
 Reach out of heaven His wonderful right hand.
 Lo, lo ! He dipped it in the unquiet sea,
 And in its curvèd palm behold the ark,
 As in a vast calm lake, came floating on.
 Aye, then, His other hand—the cursing hand—
 He took and spread between us and the sun,
 And all was black ; the day was blotted out,
 And horrible staggering took the frightened earth.
 I heard the water hiss, and then methinks
 The crack as of her splitting. Did she take
 Their palaces that are my brothers dear,
 And huddle them with all their ancientsry
 Under into her breast ? If it was black,
 How could this old man see ? There was a noise
 I' the dark, and He drew back His hand again.
 I looked——It was a dream,—let no man say
 It was aught else. There, so—the fit goes by.
 Sir, and my daughters, is it eventide ?—
 Sooner than that, saith old Methuselah,
 Let the vulture lay his beak to my green limbs.
 What ! art Thou envious ?—are the sons of men
 Too wise to please Thee, and to do Thy will ?
 Methuselah, he sitteth on the ground,
 Clad in his gown of age, the pale white gown,

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And goeth not forth to war ; his wrinkled hands
 He claspeth round his knees : old, very old.
 Would he could steal from Thee one secret more—
 The secret of Thy youth ! O, envious God !
 We die. The words of old Methuselah
 And his prophecy are ended.'

Then the wives,

Beholding how he trembled, and the maids
 And children, came anear, saying, ' Who art thou 180
 That standest gazing on the Elder ? Lo,
 Thou dost not well : withdraw ; for it was thou
 Whose stranger presence troubled him, and brought
 The fit of prophecy.' And he did turn
 To look upon them, and their majesty
 And glorious beauty took away his words ;
 And being pure among the vile, he cast
 In his thought a veil of snow-white purity
 Over the beauteous throng. ' Thou dost not well,'
 They said. He answered : ' Blossoms o' the world,
 Fruitful as fair, never in watered glade, 191
 Where in the youngest grass blue cups push forth,
 And the white lily reareth up her head,
 And purples cluster, and the saffron flower
 Clear as a flame of sacrifice breaks out,
 And every cedar bough, made delicate
 With climbing roses, drops in white and red,—
 Saw I (good angels keep you in their care)
 So beautiful a crowd.'

With that, they stamped,

Gnashed their white teeth, and turning, fled and spat 200
 Upon the floor. The Elder spake to him,
 Yet shaking with the burden, ' Who art thou ? '
 He answered, ' I, the man whom thou didst send
 To fetch through this thy woodland, do forbear
 To tell my name ; thou lovest it not, great sire,—
 No, nor mine errand. To thy house I spake,
 Touching their beauty.' ' Wherefore didst thou spite,'
 Quoth he, ' the daughters ? ' and it seemed he lost
 Count of that prophecy, for very age,
 And from his thin lips dropt a trembling laugh. 210
 ' Wicked old man,' quoth he, ' this wise old man
 I see as 't were not I. Thou bad old man,

What shall be done to thee ? for thou didst burn
 Their babes, and strew the ashes all about,
 To rid the world of His white soldiers. Aye,
 Scenting of human sacrifice, they fled.
 Cowards ! I heard them winnow their great wings :
 They went to tell Him ; but they came no more.
 The women hate to hear of them, so sore
 They grudged their little ones ; and yet no way 220
 There was but that. I took it ; I did well.'

With that he fell to weeping. ' Son,' said he,
 ' Long have I hid mine eyes from stalwart men,
 For it is hard to lose the majesty
 And pride and power of manhood : but to-day,
 Stand forth into the light, that I may look
 Upon thy strength, and think, EVEN THUS DID I,
 IN THE GLORY OF MY YOUTH, MORE LIKE TO GOD
 THAN LIKE HIS SOLDIERS, FACE THE VASSAL WORLD.'

Then Noah stood forward in his majesty, 230
 Shouldering the golden billhook, wherewithal
 He wont to cut his way, when tangled in
 The matted hayes. And down the opened roof
 Fell slanting beams upon his stately head,
 And streamed along his gown, and made to shine
 The jewelled sandals on his feet.

And, lo,

The Elder cried aloud : ' I prophesy.
 Behold, my son is as a fruitful field
 When all the lands are waste. The archers drew—
 They drew the bow against him ; they were fain 240
 To slay : but he shall live—my son shall live,
 And I shall live by him in the other days.
 Behold the prophet of the Most High God :
 Hear him. Behold the hope o' the world, what time
 She lieth under. Hear him ; he shall save
 A seed alive, and sow the earth with man.
 O, earth ! earth ! earth ! a floating shell of wood
 Shall hold the remnant of thy mighty lords.
 Will this old man be in it ? Sir, and you
 My daughters, hear him ! Lo, this white old man
 He sitteth on the ground. (Let be, let be : 251
 Why dost Thou trouble us to make our tongue

Ring with abhorred words ?) The prophecy
Of the Elder, and the vision that he saw,
They both are ended.'

Then said Noah : ' The life
Of this my lord is low for very age :
Why then, with bitter words upon thy tongue,
Father of Lamech, dost thou anger Him ?
Thou canst not strive against Him now.' He said :
' Thy feet are toward the valley, where lie bones 260
Bleaching upon the desert. Did I love
The lithe strong lizards that I yoked and set
To draw my car ? and were they not possessed ?
Yea, all of them were liars. I loved them well.
What did the Enemy, but on a day
When I behind my talking team went forth,
They sweetly lying, so that all men praised
Their flattering tongues and mild persuasive eyes—
What did the Enemy but send His slaves,
Angels, to cast down stones upon their heads 270
And break them ? Nay, I could not stir abroad
But havoc came ; they never crept or flew
Beyond the shelter that I builded here,
But straight the crowns I had set upon their heads
Were marks for myrmidons that in the clouds
Kept watch to crush them. Can a man forgive
That hath been warred on thus ? I will not. Nay,
I swear it—I, the man Methuselah.'
The Master-shipwright, he replied, ' 'Tis true,
Great loss was that ; but they that stood thy friends,
The wicked spirits, spoke upon their tongues, 281
And cursed the God of heaven. What marvel, sir,
If He was angered ? ' But the Elder cried,
' They all are dead—the toward beasts I loved ;
My goodly team, my joy, they all are dead ;
Their bones lie bleaching in the wilderness ;
And I will keep my wrath for evermore
Against the Enemy that slew them. Go,
Thou coward servant of a tyrant King,
Go down the desert of the bones, and ask, 290
" My King, what bones are these ? Methuselah,
The white old man that sitteth on the ground,
Sendeth a message, ' Bid them that they live,

And let my lizards run up every path
 They wont to take when out of silver pipes,
 The pipes that Tubal wrought into my roof,
 I blew a sweeter cry than song-bird's throat
 Hath ever formed ; and while they laid their heads
 Submiss upon my threshold, poured away
 Music that welled by heartful out, and made 300
 The throats of men that heard to swell, their breasts
 To heave with the joy of grief ; yea, caused the lips
 To laugh of men asleep.

Return to me
 The great wise lizards ; aye, and them that flew
 My pursuivants before me. Let me yoke
 Again that multitude ; and here I swear
 That they shall draw my car and me thereon
 Straight to the ship of doom. So men shall know
 My loyalty, that I submit, and Thou
 Shalt yet have honour, O mine Enemy, 310
 By me. The speech of old Methuselah.' ''

Then Noah made answer, ' By the living God,
 That is no enemy to men, great sire,
 I will not take thy message ; hear thou Him.
 " Behold (He saith that suffereth thee), behold,
 The earth that I made green cries out to Me,
 Red with the costly blood of beauteous man.
 I am robbed, I am robbed (He saith) ; they sacrifice
 To evil demons of My blameless flocks,
 That I did fashion with My hand. Behold, 320
 How goodly was the world ! I gave it thee
 Fresh from its finishing. What hast thou done ?
 I will cry out to the waters, *Cover it,*
And hide it from its Father. Lo, Mine eyes
Turn from it shamed." '

With that the old man laughed
 Full softly. ' Ay,' quoth he, ' a goodly world,
 And we have done with it as we did list.
 Why did He give it us ? Nay, look you, son :
 Five score they were that died in yonder waste ;
 And if He crieth, " Repent, be reconciled," 330
 I answer, " Nay, my lizards ; " and again,
 If He will trouble me in this mine age,

“ Why hast Thou slain my lizards ? ” Now my speech
Is cut away from all my other words,
Standing alone. The Elder sweareth it,
The man of many days, Methuselah.’

Then answered Noah, ‘ My Master, hear it not ;
But yet have patience ; ’ and he turned himself,
And down betwixt the ordered trees went forth,
And in the light of evening made his way 340
Into the waste to meet the Voice of God.

BOOK III

ABOVE the head of great Methuselah
There lay two demons in the opened roof
Invisible, and gathered up his words ;
For when the Elder prophesied, it came
About, that hidden things were shown to them,
And burdens that he spake against his time.

(But never heard them, such as dwelt with him ;
Their ears they stopped, and willed to live at ease
In all delight ; and perfect in their youth,
And strong, disport them in the perfect world.) 10

Now these were fettered that they could not fly,
For a certain disobedience they had wrought
Against the ruler of their host ; but not
The less they loved their cause ; and when the feet
O’ the Master-builder were no longer heard,
They, slipping to the sward, right painfully
Did follow, for the one to the other said,
‘ Behoves our master know of this ; and us,
Should he be favourable, he may loose
From these our bonds.’

And thus it came to pass, 20
That while at dead of night the old dragon lay
Coiled in the cavern where he dwelt, the watch
Pacing before it saw in middle air
A boat, that gleamed like fire, and on it came,
And rocked as it drew near, and then it burst
And went to pieces, and there fell therefrom,
Close at the cavern’s mouth, two glowing balls.

Now there was drawn a curtain nigh the mouth
Of that deep cave, to testify of wrath.
The dragon had been wroth with some that served, 30
And chased them from him ; and his oracles,
That wont to drop from him, were stopped, and men
Might only pray to him through that fell web
That hung before him. Then did whisper low
Some of the little spirits that bat-like clung
And cluster'd round the opening. ' Lo,' they said,
While gazed the watch upon those glowing balls,
' These are like moons eclipsed ; but let them lie
Red on the moss, and sear its dewy spires,
Until our lord give leave to draw the web, 40
And quicken reverence by his presence dread,
For he will know and call to them by name,
And they will change. At present he is sick,
And wills that none disturb him.' So they lay,
And there was silence, for the forest tribes
Came never near that cave. Wiser than men,
They fled the serpent hiss that oft by night
Came forth of it, and feared the wan dusk forms
That stalked among the trees, and in the dark
Those whiffs of flame that wandered up the sky 50
And made the moonlight sickly.

Now, the cave
Was marvellous for beauty, wrought with tools
Into the living rock, for there had worked
All cunning men, to cut on it with signs
And shows, yea, all the manner of mankind.
The fateful apple-tree was there, a bough
Bent with the weight of him that us beguiled ;
And lilies of the field did seem to blow
And bud in the storied stone. There Tubal sat,
Who from his harp delivered music, sweet 60
As any in the spheres. Yea, more ;
Earth's latest wonder, on the walls appeared,
Unfinished, workmen clustering on its ribs ;
And farther back, within the rock hewn out,
Angelic figures stood, that impious hands
Had fashioned ; many golden lamps they held
By golden chains depending, and their eyes
All tended in a reverend quietude

Toward the couch whereon the dragon lay.
 The floor was beaten gold ; the curly lengths 70
 Of his last coils lay on it, hid from sight
 With a coverlet made stiff with crusting gems,
 Fire opals shooting, rubies, fierce bright eyes
 Of diamonds, or the pale green emerald,
 That changed their lustre when he breathed.

His head

Feathered with crimson combs, and all his neck,
 And half-shut fans of his admirèd wings,
 That in their scaly splendour put to shame
 Or gold or stone, lay on his ivory couch
 And shivered ; for the dragon suffered pain : 80
 He suffered and he feared. It was his doom,
 The tempter, that he never should depart
 From the bright creature that in Paradise
 He for his evil purpose erst possessed,
 Until it died. Thus only, spirit of might
 And chiefest spirit of ill, could he be free.

But with its nature wed, as souls of men
 Are wedded to their clay, he took the dread
 Of death and dying, and the coward heart
 Of the beast, and craven terrors of the end 90
 Sank him that habited within it to dread
 Disunion. He, a dark dominion erst
 Rebellious, lay and trembled, for the flesh
 Daunted his immaterial. He was sick
 And sorry. Great ones of the earth had sent
 Their chief musicians for to comfort him,
 Chanting his praise, the friend of man, the god
 That gave them knowledge, at so great a price
 And costly. Yea, the riches of the mine,
 And glorious broidered work, and woven gold, 100
 And all things wisely made, they at his feet
 Laid daily ; for they said, ' This mighty one,
 All the world wonders' after him. He lieth
 Sick in his dwelling ; he hath long forgone
 (To do us good) dominion, and a throne,
 And his brave warfare with the Enemy,
 So much he pitieth us that were denied
 The gain and gladness of this knowledge. Now

Shall he be certified of gratitude,
And smell the sacrifice that most he loves.' 110

The night was dark, but every lamp gave forth
A tender, lustrous beam. His beauteous wings
The dragon fluttered, cursed awhile, then turned
And moaned with lamentable voice, 'I thirst,
Give me to drink.' Thereon stepped out in haste,
From inner chambers, lovely ministrants,
Young boys with radiant locks and peaceful eyes,
And poured out liquor from their cups, to cool
His parchèd tongue, and kneeling held it nigh
In jewelled basins sparkling; and he lapped, 120
And was appeased, and said, 'I will not hide
Longer, my much desired face from men.
Draw back the web of separation.' Then
With cries of gratulation ran they forth,
And flung it wide, and all the watch fell low,
Each on his face, as drunk with sudden joy.
Thus marked he, glowing on the branchèd moss,
Those red rare moons, and let his serpent eyes
Consider them full subtly, 'What be these?'
Inquiring: and the little spirits said, 130
'As we for thy protection (having heard
That wrathful sons of darkness walk to-night,
Such as do oft ill use us), clustered here,
We marked a boat a-fire, that sailed the skies,
And furrowed up like spray a billowy cloud,
And, lo, it went to pieces, scattering down
A rain of sparks and these two angry moons.'
Then said the dragon, 'Let my guard, and you,
Attendant hosts, recede;' and they went back,
And formed about the cave a widening ring, 140
Then halting, stood afar; and from the cave
The snaky wonder spoke, with hissing tongue
'If ye were Tartis and Deleisonon,
Be Tartis and Deleisonon once more.'

Then egg-like cracked the glowing balls, and forth
Started black angels, trampling hard to free
Their fettered feet from out the smoking shell.

And he said, 'Tartis and Deleisonon,
 Your lord I am : draw nigh.' 'Thou art our lord,'
 They answered, and with fettered limbs full low 150
 They bent, and made obeisance. Furthermore,
 'O fiery flying serpent, after whom
 The nations go, let thy dominion last,'
 They said, 'for ever.' And the serpent said,
 'It shall : unfold your errand.' They replied,
 One speaking for a space, and afterward
 His fellow taking up the word with fear
 And panting, 'We were set to watch the mouth
 Of great Methuselah. There came to him
 The son of Lamech two days since.' 'My lord, 160
 They prophesied, the Elder prophesied,
 Unwitting, of the flood of waters—ay,
 A vision was before him, and the lands
 Lay under water drowned : he saw the ark—
 It floated in the Enemy's right hand.'
 'Lord of the lost, the son of Lamech fled
 Into the wilderness to meet His voice
 That reigneth ; and we, diligent to hear
 Aught that might serve thee, followed, but, forbid
 To enter, lay upon its boundary cliff, 170
 And wished for morning.'

'When the dawn was red,
 We sought the man, we marked him ; and he prayed—
 Kneeling, he prayed in the valley, and he said—'
 'Nay,' quoth the serpent, 'spare me, what devout
 He fawning grovelled to the All-powerful ;
 But if of what shall hap he aught let fall,
 Speak that.' They answered, 'He did pray as one
 That looketh to outlive mankind—and more,
 We are certified by all his scattered words,
 That HE will take from men their length of days, 180
 And cut them off like grass in its first flower :
 From henceforth this shall be.'

That when he heard,
 The dragon made to the night his moan.

'And more,'
 They said, 'that He above would have men know
 That He doth love them, whoso will repent,
 To that man he is favourable, yea,
 Will be his loving Lord.'

The dragon cried,
 ' The last is worse than all. Oh, man, thy heart
 Is stout against His wrath. But will He love ?
 I heard it rumoured in the heavens of old, 190
 (And doth He love ?) Thou wilt not, canst not, stand
 Against the love of God. Dominion fails ;
 I see it float from me, that long have worn
 Fetters of flesh to win it. Love of God !
 I cry against thee ; thou art worse than all.'
 They answered, ' Be not moved, admirèd chief
 And trusted of mankind ; ' and they went on,
 And fed him with the prophecies that fell
 From the Master-shipwright in his prayer. .

But prone

He lay, for he was sick : at every word 200
 Prophetic cowering. As a bruising blow,
 It fell upon his head and daunted him,
 Until they ended, saying, ' Prince, behold,
 Thy servants have revealed the whole.'

Thereon

He out of snaky lips did hiss forth thanks.
 Then said he, ' Tartis and Deleisonon,
 Receive your wages.' So their fetters fell ;
 And they retiring, lauded him, and cried,
 ' King, reign for ever.' Then he mourned, ' Amen.'

And he—being left alone—he said : ' A light ! 210
 I see a light—a star among the trees—
 An angel.' And it drew toward the cave,
 But with its sacred feet touched not the grass,
 Nor lifted up the lids of its pure eyes,
 But hung a span's length from that ground pollute,
 At the opening of the cave.

And when he looked,
 The dragon cried, ' Thou newly-fashioned thing,
 Of name unknown, thy scorn becomes thee not.
 Doth not thy Master suffer what thine eyes
 Thou countest all too clean to open on ? ' 220
 But still it hovered, and the quietness
 Of holy heaven was on the drooping lids ;
 And not as one that answereth, it let fall

The music from its mouth, but like to one
That doth not hear, or, hearing, doth not heed.

‘ A message : “ I have heard thee, while remote
I went My rounds among the unfinished stars.”
A message : “ I have left thee to thy ways,
And mastered all thy vileness, for thy hate
I have made to serve the ends of My great love. 230
Hereafter will I chain thee down. To-day
One thing thou art forbidden ; now thou knowest
The name thereof : I told it thee in heaven,
When thou wert sitting at My feet. Forbear
To let that hidden thing be whispered forth :
For man, ungrateful (and thy hope it was,
That so ungrateful he might prove), would scorn,
And not believe it, adding so fresh weight
Of condemnation to the doomèd world.
Concerning that, thou art forbid to speak ; 240
Know thou didst count it, falling from My tongue,
A lovely song, whose meaning was unknown,
Unknowable, unbearable to thought,
But sweeter in the hearing than all harps
Toned in My holy hollow. Now thine ears
Are opened, know it, and discern and fear,
Forbearing speech of it for evermore.” ’

So said, it turned, and with a cry of joy,
As one released, went up : and it was dawn,
And all boughs dropped with dew, and out of mist 250
Came the red sun and looked into the cave.

But the dragon, left a-tremble, called to him,
From the nether kingdom, certain of his friends—
Three whom he trusted, counsellors accursed.
A thunder-cloud stooped low and swathed the place
In its black swirls, and out of it they rushed,
And hid them in recesses of the cave,
Because they could not look upon the sun,
Sith light is pure. And Satan called to them—
All in the dark, in his great rage he spake : 260
‘ Up,’ quoth the dragon ; ‘ it is time to work,
Or we are all undone.’ And he did hiss,

And there came shudderings over land and trees,
A dimness after dawn. The earth threw out
A blinding fog, that crept toward the cave,
And rolled up blank before it like a veil—
A curtain to conceal its habiders.

Then did those spirits move upon the floor,
Like pillars of darkness, and with eyes aglow.

One had a helm for covering of the scars 270
That seamed what rested of a goodly face ;
He wore his vizor up, and all his words
Were hollower than an echo from the hills :
He was hight Make. And, lo, his fellow-fiend
Came after, holding down his dastard head,
Like one ashamed : now this for craft was great ;
The dragon honoured him. A third sat down
Among them, covering with his wasted hand
Somewhat that pained his breast.

And when the fit
Of thunder, and the sobbings of the wind, 280
Were lulled, the dragon spoke with wrath and rage,
And told them of his matters : ‘ Look to this,
If ye be loyal ; ’ adding, ‘ Give your thoughts,
And let me have your counsel in this need.’

One spirit rose and spake, and all the cave
Was full of sighs, ‘ The words of Make the Prince,
Of him once delegate in Betelgeux :
Whereas of late the manner is to change,
We know not where ’t will end ; and now my words
Go thus : give way, be peaceable, lie still 290
And strive not, else the world that we have won
He may, to drive us out, reduce to nought.

‘ For while I stood in mine obedience yet,
Steering of Betelgeux my sun, behold,
A moon, that evil ones did fill, rolled up
Astray, and suddenly the Master came,
And while, a million strong, like rooks they rose,
He took and broke it, flung it here and there,
And called a blast to drive the powder forth ;
And it was fine as dust, and blurred the skies 300
Farther than ’t is from hence to this young sun.

Spirits that passed upon their work that day,
 Cried out, "How dusty 't is." Behoves us, then,
 That we depart, as leaving unto Him
 This goodly world and goodly race of man.
 Not all are doomed : hereafter it may be
 That we find place on it again. But if,
 Too zealous to preserve it, and the men
 Our servants, we oppose Him, He may come
 And choosing rather to undo His work 310
 Than strive with it for ay, make so an end.'

He sighing paused. Lo, then the serpent hissed
 In impotent rage, 'Depart ! and how depart !
 Can flesh be carried down where spirits wonn ?
 Or I, most miserable, hold my life
 Over the airless, bottomless gulf, and bide
 The buffetings of yonder shoreless sea ?
 O death, thou terrible doom : O death, thou dread
 Of all that breathe.'

A spirit rose and spake :
 'Whereas in Heaven is power, is much to fear ; 320
 For this admirèd country we have marred.
 Whereas in Heaven is love (and there are days
 When yet I can recall what love was like),
 Is nought to fear. A threatening makes the whole,
 And clogged with strong conditions : "O, repent,
 Man, and I turn." He, therefore, powerful now,
 And more so, master, that ye bide in clay,
 Threateneth that He may save. They shall not die.'

The dragon said, 'I tremble, I am sick.'
 He said with pain of heart, 'How am I fallen ! 330
 For I keep silence ; yea, I have withdrawn
 From haunting of His gates, and shouting up
 Defiance. Wherefore doth He hunt me out
 From this small world, this little one, that I
 Have been content to take unto myself,
 I here being loved and worshippèd ? He knoweth
 How much I have forgone ; and must He stoop
 To whelm the world, and heave the floors o' the deep,
 Of purpose to pursue me from my place ?
 And since I gave men knowledge, must He take 340

Their length of days whereby they perfect it ?
So shall He scatter all that I have stored,
And get them by degrading them. I know
That in the end it is appointed me
To fade. I will not fade before the time.'

A spirit rose, the third, a spirit ashamed
And subtle, and his face he turned aside :
'Whereas,' said he, 'we strive against both power
And love, behoves us that we strive aright.
Now some of old my comrades, yesterday 350
I met, as they did journey to appear
In the Presence ; and I said, " My master lieth
Sick yonder, otherwise (for no decree
There stands against it) he would also come
And make obeisance with the sons of God."
They answered, nought denying. Therefore, lord,
'Tis certain that ye have admittance yet ;
And what doth hinder ? Nothing but this breath.
Were it not well to make an end, and die,
And gain admittance to the King of kings ? 360
What if thy slaves by thy consent should take
And bear thee on their wings above the earth,
And suddenly let fall—how soon 't were o'er !
We should have fear and sinking at the heart ;
But in a little moment we should see,
Rising majestic from a ruined heap,
The stately spirit that we served of yore.'

The serpent turned his subtle deadly eyes
Upon the spirit, and hissed ; and sick with shame,
It bowed itself together, and went back 370
With hidden face. ' This counsel is not good,'
The other twain made answer ; ' look, my lord,
Whereas 't is evil in thine eyes, in ours
'Tis evil also ; speak, for we perceive
That on thy tongue the words of counsel sit,
Ready to fly to our right greedy ears,
That long for them.' And Satan, flattered thus
(For ever may the serpent kind be charmed
With soft sweet words, and music deftly played),
Replied, ' Whereas I surely rule the world, 380

Behoves that ye prepare for me a path,
 And that I, putting of my pains aside,
 Go stir rebellion in the mighty hearts
 O' the giants ; for He loveth them, and looks
 Full oft complacent on their glorious strength.
 He willeth that they yield, that He may spare ;
 But, by the blackness of my loathed den,
 I say they shall not, no, they shall not yield ;
 Go, therefore, take to you some harmless guise,
 And spread a rumour that I come. I, sick, 390
 Sorry, and aged, hasten. I have heard
 Whispers that out of heaven dropped unaware.
 I caught them up, and sith they bode men harm,
 I am ready for to comfort them ; yea, more,
 To counsel, and I will that they drive forth
 The women, the abhorred of my soul ;
 Let not a woman breathe where I shall pass,
 Lest the curse falleth, and she bruise my head.
 Friends, if it be their mind to send for me
 An army, and triumphant draw me on 400
 In the golden car ye wot of, and with shouts,
 I would not that ye hinder them. Ah, then
 Will I make hard their hearts, and grieve Him sore,
 That loves them, O, by much too well to wet
 Their stately heads, and soil those locks of strength
 Under the fateful brine. Then afterward,
 While He doth reason vainly with them, I
 Will offer Him a pact : " Great King, a pact,
 And men shall worship Thee, I say they shall,
 For I will bid them do it, yea, and leave 410
 To sacrifice their kind, so Thou my name
 Wilt suffer to be worshipped after Thine." '

' Yea, my lord Satan,' quoth they, ' do this thing,
 And let us hear thy words, for they are sweet.'

Then he made answer, ' By a messenger
 Have I this day been warned. There is a deed
 I may not tell of, lest the people add
 Scorn of a Coming Greatness to their faults.
 Why this ? Who careth when about to slay,
 And slay indeed, how well they have deserved 420

Death, whom he slayeth ? Therefore yet is hid
 A meaning of some mercy that will rob
 The nether world. Now look to it—'T were vain,
 Albeit this deluge He would send indeed,
 That we expect the harvest ; He would yet
 Be the Master-reaper ; for I heard it said,
 They that be young and know Him not, and they
 That are bound and may not build, yea, more, their wives,
 Whom, suffering not to hear the doom, they keep
 Joyous behind the curtains, every one 430
 With maidens nourished in the house, and babes
 And children at her knees—(then what remain !)
 He claimeth and will gather for His own.
 Now, therefore, it were good by guile to work,
 Princes, and suffer not the doom to fall.
 There is no evil like to love. I heard
 Him whisper it. Have I put on this flesh
 To ruin His two children beautiful,
 And shall my deed confound me in the end,
 Through awful imitation ? Love of God, 440
 I cry against thee ; thou art worst of all.'

BOOK IV

Now while these evil ones took counsel strange,
 The son of Lamech journeyed home ; and, lo !
 A company came down, and struck the track
 As he did enter it. There rode in front
 Two horsemen, young and noble, and behind
 Were following slaves with tent gear ; others led
 Strong horses, others bare the instruments
 O' the chase, and in the rear dull camels lagged,
 Sighing, for they were burdened, and they loved
 The desert sands above that grassy vale. 10

And as they met, those horsemen drew the rein,
 And fixed on him their grave untroubled eyes ;
 He in his regal grandeur walked alone,
 And had nor steed nor follower, and his mien

Was grave and like to theirs. He said to them,
 ' Fair sirs, whose are ye ? ' They made answer cold,
 ' The beautiful woman, sir, our mother dear,
 Niloiya, bare us to great Lamech's son.'
 And he, replying, ' I am he,' they said,
 ' We know it, sir. We have remembered you 20
 Through many seasons. Pray you let us not ;
 We fain would greet our mother.' And they made
 Obeisance and passed on ; then all their train,
 Which while they spoke had halted, moved apace,
 And, while the silent father stood, went by,
 He gazing after, as a man that dreams ;
 For he was sick with their cold, quiet scorn,
 That seemed to say, ' Father, we own you not,
 We love you not, for you have left us long—
 So long, we care not that you come again.' 30

And while the sullen camels moved, he spake
 To him that led the last, ' There are but two
 Of these my sons ; but where doth Japhet ride ?
 For I would see him.' And the leader said,
 ' Sir, ye shall find him, if ye follow up
 Along the track. Afore the noonday meal
 The young men, even our masters, bathed ; (there grows
 A clump of cedars by the bend of yon
 Clear river)—there did Japhet, after meat,
 Being right weary, lay him down and sleep. 40
 There, with a company of slaves and some
 Few camels, ye shall find him.'

And the man,
 The father of these three, did let him pass,
 And struggle and give battle to his heart,
 Standing as motionless as pillar set
 To guide a wanderer in a pathless waste ;
 But all his strength went from him, and he strove
 Vainly to trample out and trample down
 The misery of his love unsatisfied—
 Unutterable love flung in his face. 50

Then he broke out in passionate words, that cried
 Against his lot, ' I have lost my own, and won
 None other ; no, not one ! Alas, my sons !

That I have looked to for my solacing,
In the bitterness to come. My children dear !'
And when from his own lips he heard those words,
With passionate stirring of the heart, he wept.

And none came near to comfort him. His face
Was on the ground ; but having wept, he rose
Full hastily, and urged his way to find 60
The river ; and in hollow of his hand
Raised up the water to his brow : ' This son,
This other son of mine,' he said, ' shall see
No tears upon my face.' And he looked on,
Beheld the camels, and a group of slaves
Sitting apart from some one fast asleep,
Where they had spread out webs of broidery work
Under a cedar tree ; and he came on,
And when they made obeisance he declared
His name, and said, ' I will beside my son 70
Sit till he wakeneth.' So Japhet lay
A-dreaming, and his father drew to him.
He said, ' This cannot scorn me yet ;' and paused,
Right angry with himself, because the youth,
Albeit of stately growth, so languidly
Lay with a listless smile upon his mouth,
That was full sweet and pure ; and as he looked,
He half forgot his trouble in his pride.
' And is this mine ?' said he, ' my son ! mine own !
(God, thou art good !) O, if this turn away, 80
That pang shall be past bearing. I must think
That all the sweetness of his goodly face
Is copied from his soul. How beautiful
Are children to their fathers ! Son, my heart
Is greatly glad because of thee ; my life
Shall lack of no completeness in the days
To come. If I forget the joy of youth,
In thee shall I be comforted ; aye, see
My youth, a dearer than my own again.'

And when he ceased, the youth, with sleep content, 90
Murmured a little, turned himself and woke.

He woke, and opened on his father's face
The darkness of his eyes ; but not a word

The Master-shipwright said—his lips were sealed ;
 He was not ready, for he feared to see
 This mouth curl up with scorn. And Japhet spoke,
 Full of the calm that cometh after sleep :
 ‘ Sir, I have dreamed of you. I pray you, sir,
 What is your name ? ’ and even with his words 99
 His countenance changed. The son of Lamech said,
 ‘ Why art thou sad ? What have I done to thee ? ’
 And Japhet answered, ‘ Oh, methought I fled
 In the wilderness before a maddened beast,
 And you came up and slew it ; and I thought
 You were my father ; but I fear me, sir,
 My thoughts were vain.’ With that his father said,
 ‘ Whate’er of blessing Thou reserv’st for me,
 God ! if Thou wilt not give to both, give here :
 Bless him with both Thy hands ; ’ and laid his own
 On Japhet’s head.

Then Japhet looked on him, 110
 Made quiet by content, and answered low,
 With faltering laughter, glad and reverent : ‘ Sir,
 You are my father ? ’ ‘ Aye,’ quoth he, ‘ I am !
 Kiss me, my son ; and let me hear my name,
 My much desired name, from your dear lips.’

Then after, rested, they betook them home :
 And Japhet, walking by the Master, thought,
 ‘ I did not will to love this sire of mine ;
 But now I feel as if I had always known
 And loved him well ; truly, I see not why, 120
 But I would rather serve him than go free
 With my two brethren.’ And he said to him,
 ‘ Father ! ’—who answered, ‘ I am here, my son.’
 And Japhet said, ‘ I pray you, sir, attend
 To this my answer : let me go with you,
 For, now I think on it, I do not love
 The chase, nor managing the steed, nor yet
 The arrows and the bow ; but rather you,
 For all you do and say, and you yourself,
 Are goodly and delightsome in mine eyes. 130
 I pray you, sir, when you go forth again,
 That I may also go.’ And he replied,
 ‘ I will tell thy speech unto the Highest ; He

Shall answer it. But I would speak to thee
 Now of the days to come. Know thou, most dear
 To this thy father, that the drenchèd world,
 When risen clean washed from water, shall receive
 From thee her lordliest governors, from thee
 Daughters of noblest soul.'

So Japhet said,

'Sir, I am young, but of my mother straight 140
 I will go ask a wife, that this may be.
 I pray you, therefore, as the manner is
 Of fathers, give me land that I may reap
 Corn for sustaining of my wife, and bruise
 The fruit of the vine to cheer her.' But he said,
 'Dost thou forget? or dost thou not believe,
 My son?' He answered, 'I did ne'er believe,
 My father, ere to-day; but now, methinks;
 Whatever thou believest I believe,
 For thy belovèd sake. If this then be 150
 As thou (I hear) hast said, and earth doth bear
 The last of her wheat harvests, and make ripe
 The latest of her grapes; yet hear me, sir,
 None of the daughters shall be given to me
 If I be landless.' Then his father said,
 'Lift up thine eyes toward the north, my son :'
 And so he did. 'Behold thy heritage !'
 Quoth the world's prince and master, 'far away
 Upon the side o' the north, where green the field
 Lies every season through, and where the dews 160
 Of heaven are wholesome, shall thy children reign ;
 I part it to them, for the earth is mine ;
 The Highest gave it me : I make it theirs.
 Moreover, for thy marriage gift, behold
 The cedars where thou sleepedst ! There are vines ;
 And up the rise is growing wheat. I give
 (For all, alas ! is mine)—I give thee both
 For dowry, and my blessing.'

And he said,

'Sir, you are good, and therefore the Most High
 Shall bless me also. Sir, I love you well.' 170

BOOK V

AND when two days were over, Japhet said,
‘Mother, so please you, get a wife for me.’
The mother answered, ‘Dost thou mock me, son ?
’Tis not the manner of our kin to wed
So young. Thou knowest it ; art thou not ashamed ?
Thou carest not for a wife.’ And the youth blushed,
And made for answer : ‘This, my father, saith
The doom is nigh ; now therefore find a maid,
Or else shall I be wifeless all my days.
And as for me, I care not ; but the lands 10
Are parted, and the goodliest share is mine.
And lo ! my brethren are betrothed ; their maids
Are with thee in the house. Then why not mine ?
Didst thou not diligently search for these
Among the noblest born of all the earth,
And bring them up ? My sisters, dwell they not
With women that bespake them for their sons ?
Now, therefore, let a wife be found for me,
Fair as the day, and gentle to my will
As thou art to my father’s.’ When she heard, 20
Niloiya sighed, and answered, ‘It is well.’
And Japhet went out from her presence.

Then
Quoth the great Master : ‘Wherefore sought ye not,
Woman, these many days, nor tired at all,
Till ye had found, a maiden for my son ?
In this ye have done ill.’ Niloiya said :
‘Let not my lord be angry. All my soul
Is sad : my lord hath walked afar so long,
That some despise thee ; yea, our servants fail
Lately to bring their stint of corn and wood. 30
And, sir, thy household slaves do steal away
To thy great father, and our lands lie waste—
None till them : therefore think the women scorn
To give me—whatsoever gems I send,
And goodly raiment—(yea, I seek afar,
And sue with all desire and humbleness
Through every master’s house, but no one gives)—
A daughter for my son.’ With that she ceased.

Then said the Master : ‘ Some thou hast with thee,
 Brought up among thy children, dutiful 40
 And fair ; thy father gave them for my slaves—
 Children of them whom he brought captive forth
 From their own heritage.’ And she replied,
 Right scornfully : ‘ Shall Japhet wed a slave ? ’
 Then said the Master : ‘ He shall wed : look thou
 To that. I say not he shall wed a slave ;
 But by the might of One that made him mine,
 I will not quit thee for my doomèd way
 Until thou wilt betroth him. Therefore, haste,
 Beautiful woman, loved of me and mine, 50
 To bring a maiden, and to say, “ Behold
 A wife for Japhet.” ’ Then she answered, ‘ Sir,
 It shall be done.’

And forth Niloiya sped.
 She gathered all her jewels—all she held
 Of costly or of rich—and went and spake
 With some few slaves that yet abode with her,
 For daily they were fewer ; and went forth,
 With fair and flattering words, among her feres,
 And fain had wrought with them : and she had hope
 That made her sick, it was so faint ; and then 60
 She had fear, and after she had certainty,
 For all did scorn her. ‘ Nay,’ they cried, ‘ O fool !
 If this be so, and on a watery world
 Ye think to rock, what matters if a wife
 Be free or bond ? There shall be none to rule,
 If she have freedom : if she have it not,
 None shall there be to serve.’

And she alit,
 The time being done, desponding at her door,
 And went behind a screen, where should have wrought
 The daughters of the captives ; but there wrought 70
 One only, and this rose from off the floor,
 Where she the river rush full deftly wove,
 And made obeisance. Then Niloiya said,
 ‘ Where are thy fellows ? ’ And the maid replied,
 ‘ Let not Niloiya, this my lady loved,
 Be angry ; they are fled since yesternight.’
 Then said Niloiya, ‘ Amarant, my slave,
 When have I called thee by thy name before ? ’

She answered, ' Lady, never ; ' and she took
 And spread her broidered robe before her face. 80
 Niloiya spoke thus : ' I am come to woe,
 And thou to honour.' Saying this, she wept
 Passionate tears ; and all the damsel's soul
 Was full of yearning wonder, and her robe
 Slipped from her hand, and her right innocent face
 Was seen betwixt her locks of tawny hair
 That dropped about her knees, and her two eyes,
 Blue as the much-loved flower that rims the beck,
 Looked sweetly on Niloiya ; but she knew
 No meaning in her words ; and she drew nigh, 90
 And kneeled and said, ' Will this my lady speak ?
 Her damsel is desirous of her words.'
 Then said Niloiya, ' I, thy mistress, sought
 A wife for Japhet, and no wife is found.'
 And yet again she wept with grief of heart,
 Saying, ' Ah me, miserable ! I must give
 A wife : the Master willeth it : a wife,
 Ah me ! unto the high-born. He will scorn
 His mother and reproach me. I must give—
 None else have I to give—a slave—even thee.' 100
 This further spake Niloiya : ' I was good—
 Had rue on thee, a tender sucking child,
 When they did tear thee from thy mother's breast ;
 I fed thee, gave thee shelter, and I taught
 Thy hands all cunning arts that women prize.
 But out on me ! my good is turned to ill.
 O, Japhet, well beloved ! ' And she rose up,
 And did restrain herself, saying, ' Dost thou heed ?
 Behold, this thing shall be.' The damsel sighed,
 ' Lady, I do.' Then went Niloiya forth. 110

And Amarant murmured in her deep amaze,
 ' Shall Japhet's little children kiss my mouth ?
 And will he sometimes take them from my arms,
 And almost care for me for their sweet sake ?
 I have not dared to think I loved him—now
 I know it well : but O, the bitterness
 For him ! ' And ending thus, the damsel rose,
 For Japhet entered. And she bowed herself
 Meekly and made obeisance, but her blood

Ran cold about her heart, for all his face 120
Was coloured with his passion.

Japhet spoke :
He said, ' My father's slave ; ' and she replied,
Low drooping her fair head, ' My master's son.'
And after that a silence fell on them,
With trembling at her heart, and rage at his.
And Japhet, mastered of his passion, sat
And could not speak. O ! cruel seemed his fate—
So cruel her that told it, so unkind.
His breast was full of wounded love and wrath
Wrestling together ; and his eyes flashed out 130
Indignant lights, as all amazed he took
The insult home that she had offered him,
Who should have held his honour dear.

And, lo,
The misery choked him, and he cried in pain,
' Go, get thee forth ; ' but she, all white and still,
Parted her lips to speak, and yet spake not,
Nor moved. And Japhet rose up passionate,
With lifted arm as one about to strike ;
But she cried out and met him, and she held 139
With desperate might his hand, and prayed to him,
' Strike not, or else shall men from henceforth say,
" Japhet is like to us." ' And he shook off
The damsel, and he said, ' I thank thee, slave ;
For never have I stricken yet or child
Or woman. Not for thy sake am I glad,
Nay, but for mine. Get hence. Obey my words.'
Then Japhet lifted up his voice, and wept.

And no more he restrained himself, but cried,
With heavings of the heart, ' O hateful day !
O day that shuts the door upon delight. 150
A slave ! to wed a slave ! O loathèd wife,
Hated of Japhet's soul.' And after, long,
With face between his hands, he sat, his thoughts
Sullen and sore ; then scorned himself, and saying,
' I will not take her, I will die unwed,
It is but that ; ' lift up his eyes and saw
The slave, and she was sitting at his feet ;
And he, so greatly wondering that she dared

The disobedience, looked her in the face
 Less angry than afraid, for pale she was 160
 As lily yet unsmiled on by the sun ;
 And he, his passion being spent, sighed out,
 ' Low am I fallen indeed. Hast thou no fear,
 That thou dost flout me ? ' but she gave to him
 The sighing echo of his sigh, and mourned,
 ' No.'

And he wondered, and he looked again,
 For in her heart there was a new-born pang,
 That cried ; but she, as mothers with their young,
 Suffered, yet loved it ; and there shone a strange
 Grave sweetness in her blue unsullied eyes. 170
 And Japhet, leaning from the settle, thought,
 ' What is it ? I will call her by her name,
 To comfort her, for also she is nought
 To blame ; and since I will not her to wife,
 She falls back from the freedom she had hoped.'
 Then he said, ' Amarant ; ' and the damsel drew
 Her eyes down slowly from the shaded sky
 Of even, and she said, ' My master's son,
 Japhet ; ' and Japhet said, ' I am not wroth
 With thee, but wretched for my mother's deed, 180
 Because she shamed me.'

And the maiden said,
 ' Doth not thy father love thee well, sweet sir ? '
 ' Aye,' quoth he, ' well.' She answered, ' Let the heart
 Of Japhet, then, be merry. Go to him
 And say, " The damsel whom my mother chose,
 Sits by her in the house ; but as for me,
 Sir, ere I take her, let me go with you
 To that same outland country. Also, sir,
 My damsel hath not worked as yet the robe
 Of her betrothal ; " now, then, sith he loves, 190
 He will not say thee nay. Herein for awhile
 Is respite, and thy mother far and near
 Will seek again : it may be she will find
 A fair, free maiden.'

Japhet said, ' O maid,
 Sweet are thy words ; but what if I return,
 And all again be as it is to-day ? '
 Then Amarant answered, ' Some have died in youth ;

But yet, I think not, sir, that I shall die.
Though ye shall find it even as I had died—
Silent, for any words I might have said ; 200
Empty, for any space I might have filled.
Sir, I will steal away, and hide afar ;
But if a wife be found, then will I bide
And serve.' He answered, ' Oh, thy speech is good ;
Now therefore (since my mother gave me thee),
I will reward it ; I will find for thee
A goodly husband, and will make him free
Thee also.'

Then she started from his feet,
And, red with shame and anger, flashed on him
The passion of her eyes ; and put her hands 210
With catching of the breath to her fair throat,
And stood in her defiance lost to fear,
Like some fair hind in desperate danger turned
And brought to bay, and wild in her despair.
But shortly, ' I remember,' quoth she, low,
With raining down of tears and broken sighs,
' That I am Japhet's slave ; ' beseech you, sir,
As ye were ever gentle, aye, and sweet
Of language to me, be not harder now.
Sir, I was yours to take ; I knew not, sir, 220
That also ye might give me. Pray you, sir,
Be pitiful—be merciful to me,
A slave.' He said, ' I thought to do thee good,
For good hath been thy counsel ; ' but she cried,
' Good master, be you therefore pitiful
To me, a slave.' And Japhet wondered much
At her, and at her beauty, for he thought,
' None of the daughters are so fair as this,
Nor stand with such a grace majestic ;
She in her locks is like the travelling sun, 230
Setting, all clad in coifing clouds of gold.
And would she die unmatched ? ' He said to her,
' What ! wilt thou sail alone in yonder ship,
And dwell alone hereafter ? ' ' Aye,' she said,
' And serve my mistress.'

' It is well,' quoth he,
And held his hand to her, as is the way
Of masters. Then she kissed it, and she said,

‘ Thanks for benevolence,’ and turned herself,
 Adding, ‘ I rest, sir, on your gracious words ;’
 Then stepped into the twilight and was gone.

240

And Japhet, having found his father, said,
 ‘ Sir, let me also journey when ye go.’
 Who answered, ‘ Hath thy mother done her part ?’
 He said, ‘ Yea, truly, and my damsel sits
 Before her in the house ; and also, sir,
 She said to me, “ I have not worked, as yet,
 The garment of betrothal.” ’ And he said,
 ‘ ’Tis not the manner of our kin to speak
 Concerning matters that a woman rules ;
 But hath thy mother brought a damsel home,
 And let her see thy face, then all is one
 As ye were wed.’ He answered, ‘ Even so ;
 It matters nothing ; therefore hear me, sir :
 The damsel being mine, I am content
 To let her do according to her will ;
 And when we shall return, so surely, sir,
 As I shall find her by my mother’s side,
 Then will I take her ;’ and he left to speak ;
 His father answering, ‘ Son, thy words are good.

250

BOOK VI

NIGHT. Now a tent was pitched, and Japhet sat
 In the door and watched, for on a litter lay
 The father of his love. And he was sick
 To death ; but daily he would rouse him up,
 And stare upon the light, and ever say,
 ‘ On, let us journey ;’ but it came to pass
 That night, across their path a river ran,
 And they who served the father and the son
 Had pitched the tents beside it, and had made
 A fire, to scare away the savagery
 That roamed in that great forest, for their way
 Had led among the trees of God.

10

The moon
 Shone on the river, like a silver road
 To lead them over ; but when Japhet looked,

He said, ' We shall not cross it. I shall lay
This well-belovèd head low in the leaves—
Not on the farther side.' From time to time,
The water-snakes would stir its glassy flow
With curling undulations, and would lay
Their heads along the bank, and, subtle-eyed, 20
Consider those long spiriting flames, that danced,
When some red log would break and crumble down,
And show his dark despondent eyes, that watched,
Wearily, even Japhet's. But he cared
Little ; and in the dark, that was not dark,
But dimness of confused incertitude,
Would move anear all silently, and gaze
And breathe, and shape itself, a manèd thing
With eyes ; and still he cared not, and the form
Would falter, then recede, and melt again 30
Into the farther shade. And Japhet said :
' How long ? The moon hath grown again in heaven,
After her caving twice, since we did leave
The threshold of our home ; and now what 'vails
That far on tumbled mountain snow we toiled,
Hungry, and weary, all the day ; by night
Waked with a dreadful trembling underneath,
To look, while every cone smoked, and there ran
Red brooks adown, that licked the forest up,
While in the pale white ashes wading on 40
We saw no stars ?—what 'vails if afterward,
Astonished with great silence, we did move
Over the measureless, unknown desert mead ;
While all the day, in rents and crevices,
Would lie the lizard and the serpent kind,
Drowsy ; and in the night take fearsome shapes,
And oft-times woman-faced and woman-haired
Would trail their snaky length, and curse and mourn ;
Or there would wander up, when we were tired,
Dark troops of evil ones, with eyes morose, 50
Withstanding us, and staring ;—O ! what 'vails
That in the dread deep forest we have fought
With following packs of wolves ? These men of might,
Even the giants, shall not hear the doom
My father came to tell them of. Ah, me !
If God indeed had sent him, would he lie

(For he is stricken with a sore disease)
 Helpless outside their city ? ’

Then he rose,
 And put aside the curtains of the tent,
 To look upon his father’s face ; and lo ! 60
 The tent being dark, he thought that somewhat sat
 Beside the litter ; and he set his eyes
 To see it, and saw not ; but only marked
 Where, fallen away from manhood and from power,
 His father lay. Then he came forth again,
 Trembling, and crouched beside the dull red fire,
 And murmured, ‘ Now it is the second time :
 An old man, as I think (but scarcely saw),
 Dreadful of might. Its hair was white as wool :
 I dared not look ; perhaps I saw not aught, 70
 But only knew that it was there : the same
 Which walked beside us once when he did pray.’
 And Japhet hid his face between his hands
 For fear, and grief of heart, and weariness
 Of watching ; and he slumbered not, but mourned
 To himself, a little moment, as it seemed,
 For sake of his loved father : then he lift
 His eyes, and day had dawned. Right suddenly
 The moon withheld her silver, and she hung
 Frail as a cloud. The ruddy flame that played 80
 By night on dim, dusk trees, and on the flood,
 Crept red amongst the logs, and all the world
 And all the water blushed and bloomed. The stars
 Were gone, and golden shafts came up, and touched
 The feathered heads of palms, and green was born
 Under the rosy cloud, and purples flew
 Like veils across the mountains ; and he saw,
 Winding athwart them, bathed in blissful peace,
 And the sacredness of morn, the battlements
 And outposts of the giants ; and there ran 90
 On the other side the river, as it were,
 White mounds of marble, tabernacles fair,
 And towers below a line of inland cliff :
 These were their fastnesses, and here their homes.

In valleys and the forest, all that night,
 There had been woe ; in every hollow place,

And under walls, like drifted flowers, or snow,
Women lay mourning ; for the serpent lodged
That night within the gates, and had decreed,
‘ I will (or ever I come) that ye drive out 100
The women, the abhorred of my soul.’
Therefore, more beauteous than all climbing bloom,
Purple and scarlet, cumbering of the boughs,
Or flights of azure doves that lit to drink
The water of the river : or, new born,
The quivering butterflies in companies,
That slowly crept adown the sandy marge,
Like living crocus beds, and also drank,
And rose an orange cloud ; their hollowed hands
They dipped between the lilies, or with robes 110
Full of ripe fruitage, sat and peeled and ate,
Weeping ; or comforting their little ones,
And lulling them with sorrowful long hymns
Among the palms.

So went the earlier morn.

Then came a messenger, while Japhet sat
Mournfully, and he said, ‘ The men of might
Are willing ; let thy master, youth, appear.’
And Japhet said, ‘ So be it ;’ and he thought,
‘ Now will I trust in God ;’ and he went in
And stood before his father, and he said, 120
‘ My father ;’ but the Master answered not,
But gazed upon the curtains of his tent,
Nor knew that one had called him. He was clad
As ready for the journey, and his feet
Were sandalled, and his staff was at his side ;
And Japhet took the gown of sacrifice
And spread it on him, and he laid his crown
Upon his knees, and he went forth, and lift
His hand to heaven, and cried, ‘ My father’s God !’
But neither whisper came nor echo fell 130
When he did listen. Therefore he went on :
‘ Behold, I have a thing to say to thee.
My father charged thy servant, “ Let not ruth
Prevail with thee, to turn and bear me hence,
For God appointed me my task, to preach
Before the mighty.” I must do my part
(O ! let it not displease thee), for he said

But yesternight, "When they shall send for me,
Take me before them." And I sware to him.
I pray thee, therefore, count his life and mine 140
Precious ; for I that sware, I will perform.'

Then cried he to his people, ' Let us hence :
Take up the litter.' And they set their feet
Toward the raft whereby men crossed that flood.

And while they journeyed, lo, the giants sat
Within the fairest hall where all were fair,
Each on his carven throne, o'er-canopied
With work of women. And the dragon lay
In a place of honour ; and with subtlety
He counselled them, for they did speak by turns ; 150
And they being proud, might nothing master them,
But guile alone : and he did fawn on them ;
And when the younger taunted him, submiss
He testified great humbleness, and cried,
' A cruel God, forsooth ! but nay, O nay,
I will not think it of Him, that He meant
To threaten these. O, when I look on them,
How doth my soul admire.'

And one stood forth,
The youngest ; of his brethren, named ' the Rock.'
' Speak out,' quoth he, ' thou toothless slaving thing,
What is it ? thinkest thou that such as we 161
Should be afraid ? What is this goodly doom ?'
And Satan laughed upon him. ' Lo,' said he,
' Thou art not fully grown, and every one
I look on, standeth higher by the head,
Yea, and the shoulders, than do other men ;
Forsooth, thy servant thought not thou wouldst fear,
Thou and thy fellows.' Then with one accord,
' Speak,' cried they ; and with mild persuasive eyes,
And flattering tongue, he spoke.

' Ye mighty ones,
It hath been known to you these many days 171
How that for piety I am much famed.
I am exceeding pious : if I lie,
As hath been whispered, it is but for sake
Of God, and that ye should not think Him hard,

For I am all for God. Now some have thought
 That He hath also (and it may be so
 Or yet may not be so) on me been hard ;
 Be not ye therefore wroth, for my poor sake ;
 I am contented to have earned your weal,
 Though I must therefore suffer.

180

Now to-day

One cometh, yea, an harmless man, a fool,
 Who boasts he hath a message from our God,
 And lest that you, for bravery of heart
 And stoutness, being angered with his prate,
 Should lift a hand, and kill him, I am here.'

Then spoke the Leader, ' How now, snake ? Thy words
 Ring false. Why ever liest thou, snake, to us ?
 Thou coward ! none of us will see thee harmed.
 I say thou liest. The land is strewed with slain ;
 Myself have hewn down companies, and blood
 Makes fertile all the field. Thou knowest it well ;
 And hast thou, driveller, panting sore for age,
 Come with a force to bid us spare one fool ? '

190

And Satan answered, ' Nay you ! be not wroth ;
 Yet true it is, and yet not all the truth.
 Your servant would have told the rest, if now
 (For fullness of your life being fretted sore
 At mine infirmities, which God in vain
 I supplicate to heal) ye had not caused
 My speech to stop.' And he they called ' the Oak '
 Made answer, ' 'Tis a good snake ; let him be.
 Why would ye fright the poor old craven beast ?
 Look how his lolling tongue doth foam for fear.
 Ye should have mercy, brethren, on the weak.
 Speak, dragon, thou hast leave ; make stout thy heart.
 What ! hast thou lied to this great company ?
 It was, we know it was, for humbleness ;
 Thou wert not willing to offend with truth.'

200

' Yea, majesties,' quoth Satan, ' thus it was,'
 And lifted up appealing eyes, and groaned ;
 ' O, can it be, compassionate as brave,
 And housed in cunning works themselves have reared,

210

And served in gold, and warmed with minivere,
 And ruling nobly—that He, not content
 Unless alone He reigneth, looks to bend
 Or break them in, like slaves to cry to Him,
 “What is Thy will with us, O Master dear ?”
 Or else to eat of death ?

For my part, lords,

I cannot think it : for my piety 220

And reason, which I also share with you,
 Are my best lights, and ever counsel me,
 “Believe not aught against thy God ; believe,
 Since thou canst never reach to do Him wrong,
 That He will never stoop to do thee wrong.
 Is He not just and equal, yea, and kind ?”

Therefore, O majesties, it is my mind
 Concerning him ye wot of, thus to think
 The message is not like what I have learned
 By reason, and experience, of the God. 230

Therefore no message ’t is. The man is mad.’
 Thereat the Leader laughed for scorn. ‘Hold, snake ;
 If God be just, there SHALL be reckoning days.
 We rather would He were a partial God,
 And being strong, He sided with the strong.
 Turn now thy reason to the other side,
 And speak for that ; for as to justice, snake,
 We would have none of it.’

And Satan fawned :

‘My lord is pleased to mock at my poor wit ;
 Yet in my pious fashion I must talk : 240
 For say that God was wroth with man, and came
 And slew him, that should make an empty world,
 But not a better nation.’

This replied,

‘Truth, dragon, yet He is not bound to mean
 A better nation ; maybe, He designs,
 If none will turn again, a punishment
 Upon an evil one.’

And Satan cried,

‘Alas ! my heart being full of love for men,
 I cannot choose but think of God as like 250
 To me ; and yet my piety concludes,
 Since He will have your fear, that love alone

Sufficeth not, and I admire, and say,
 "Give me, O friends, your love, and give to God
 Your fear." ' But they cried out in wrath and rage,
 'We are not strong that any we will fear,
 Nor specially a foe that means us ill.'

BOOK VII

AND while he spoke there was a noise without ;
 The curtains of the door were flung aside,
 And some with heavy feet bare in, and set
 A litter on the floor.

The Master lay

Upon it, but his eyes were dimmed and set ;
 And Japhet, in despairing weariness,
 Leaned it beside. He marked the mighty ones,
 Silent for pride of heart, and in his place
 The jewelled dragon ; and the dragon laughed,
 And subtly peered at him, till Japhet shook 10
 With rage and fear. The snaky wonder cried,
 Hissing, 'Thou brown-haired youth, come up to me ;
 I fain would have thee for my shrine afar,
 To serve among an host as beautiful
 As thou : draw near.' It hissed, and Japhet felt
 Horrible drawings, and cried out in fear,
 'Father ! O help, the serpent draweth me !'
 And struggled and grew faint, as in the toils
 A netted bird. But still his father lay
 Unconscious, and the mighty did not speak, 20
 But half in fear and half for wonderment
 Beheld. And yet again the dragon laughed,
 And leered at him and hissed ; and Japhet strove
 Vainly to take away his spell-set eyes,
 And moved to go to him, till piercingly
 Crying out, 'God ! forbid it, God in heaven !'
 The dragon lowered his head, and shut his eyes
 As feigning sleep ; and, suddenly released,
 He fell back staggering ; and at noise of it,
 And clash of Japhet's weapons on the floor, 30
 And Japhet's voice crying out, 'I loathe thee, snake !
 I hate thee ! O, I hate thee !' came again

The senses of the shipwright ; and he, moved,
 And looking, as one 'mazed, distressfully
 Upon the mighty, said, ' One called on God :
 Where is my God ? If God have need of me,
 Let Him come down and touch my lips with strength,
 Or dying I shall die.'

It came to pass,
 While he was speaking, that the curtains swayed ;
 A rushing wind did move throughout the place, 40
 And all the pillars shook, and on the head
 Of Noah the hair was lifted, and there played
 A somewhat, as it were a light, upon
 His breast ; then fell a darkness, and men heard
 A whisper as of one that spake. With that,
 The daunted mighty ones kept silent watch
 Until the wind had ceased and darkness fled.
 When it grew light, there curled a cloud of smoke
 From many censers where the dragon lay.
 It hid him. He had called his ministrants, 50
 And bid them veil him thus, that none might look ;
 Also the folk who came with Noah had fled.

But Noah was seen, for he stood up erect,
 And leaned on Japhet's hand. Then, after pause,
 The Leader said, ' My brethren, it were well
 (For nought we fear) to let this sorcerer speak.'
 And they did reach toward the man their staves,
 And cry with loud accord, ' Hail, sorcerer, hail !'

And he made answer, ' Hail ! I am a man
 That is a shipwright. I was born afar 60
 To Lamech, him that reigns a king, to wit,
 Over the land of Jalal. Majesties,
 I bring a message,—lay you it to heart ;
 For there is wrath in heaven : my God is wroth.
 " Prepare your houses, or I come," saith He,
 " A Judge." Now, therefore, say not in your hearts,
 " What have we done ? " Your dogs may answer that,
 To make whom fiercer for the chase, ye feed
 With captives whom ye slew not in the war,
 But saved alive, and living throw to them 70
 Daily. Your wives may answer that, whose babes

Their firstborn ye do take and offer up
 To this abhorred snake, while yet the milk
 Is in their innocent mouths—your maiden babes
 Tender. Your slaves may answer that—the gangs
 Whose eyes ye did put out to make them work
 By night unwitting (yea, by multitudes
 They work upon the wheel in chains). Your friends
 May answer that—(their bleached bones cry out) 80
 For ye did, wickedly, to eat their lands,
 Turn on their valleys, in a time of peace,
 The rivers, and they, choking in the night,
 Died unavenged. But rather (for I leave
 To tell of more, the time would be so long
 To do it, and your time, O mighty ones,
 Is short),—but rather say, “ We sinners know
 Why the Judge standeth at the door,” and turn
 While yet there may be respite, and repent.

“ Or else,” saith He that formed you, “ I swear,
 By all the silence of the times to come, 90
 By the solemnities of death,—yea, more,
 By Mine own power and love which ye have scorned,
 That I will come. I will command the clouds,
 And raining they shall rain ; yea, I will stir
 With all my storms the ocean for your sake,
 And break for you the boundary of the deep.

“ Then shall the mighty mourn.
 “ Should I forbear,
 That have been patient ? I will not forbear !
 For yet,” saith He, “ the weak cry out ; for yet
 The little ones do languish ; and the slave 100
 Lifts up to Me his chain. I therefore, I
 Will hear them. I by death will scatter you ;
 Yea, and by death will draw them to My breast,
 And gather them to peace.

“ But yet,” saith He,
 “ Repent, and turn you. Wherefore will ye die ? ”

‘ Turn then, O turn, while yet the enemy
 Untamed of man fatefully moans afar ;
 For if ye will not turn, the doom is near.

Then shall the crested wave make sport, and beat
 You mighty at your doors. Will ye be wroth ? 110
 Will ye forbid it ? Monsters of the deep
 Shall suckle in your palaces their young,
 And swim atween your hangings, all of them
 Costly with broidered work, and rare with gold
 And white and scarlet (there did ye oppress—
 There did ye make you vile) ; but ye shall lie
 Meekly, and storm and wind shall rage above,
 And urge the weltering wave.

“ Yet,” saith thy God,
 “ Son,” aye, to each of you He saith, “ O son,
 Made in My image, beautiful and strong, 120
 Why wilt thou die ? Thy Father loves thee well.
 Repent and turn thee from thine evil ways,
 O son ! and no more dare the wrath of love.
 Live for thy Father’s sake that formèd thee.
 Why wilt thou die ? ” Here will I make an end.’

Now ever on his daïs the dragon lay,
 Feigning to sleep ; and all the mighty ones
 Were wroth, and chided, some against the woe,
 And some at whom the sorcerer they had named,—
 Some at their fellows, for the younger sort— 130
 As men the less acquaint with deeds of blood,
 And given to learning and the arts of peace
 (Their fathers having crushed rebellion out
 Before their time)—lent favourable ears.
 They said, ‘ A man, or false or fanatic,
 May claim good audience if he fill our ears
 With what is strange : and we would hear again.’

The Leader said, ‘ An audience hath been given.
 The man hath spoken, and his words are nought ;
 A feeble threatener, with a foolish threat, 140
 And it is not our manner that we sit
 Beyond the noonday ; ’ then they grandly rose,
 A stalwart crowd, and with their Leader moved
 To the tones of harping, and the beat of shawms,
 And the noise of pipes, away. But some were left
 About the Master ; and the feigning snake
 Couched on his daïs.

Then one to Japhet said,
 One called ' the Cedar Tree ', ' Dost thou, too, think
 To reign upon our lands when we lie drowned ? '
 And Japhet said, ' I think not, nor desire, 150
 Nor in my heart consent, but that ye swear
 Allegiance to the God, and live.' He cried,
 To one surnamed ' the Pine '—' Brother, behoves
 That deep we cut our names in yonder crag,
 Else when this youth returns, his sons may ask
 Our names, and he may answer, " Matters not,
 For my part I forget them." '

Japhet said,
 ' They might do worse than that, they might deny
 That such as you have ever been.' With that
 They answered, ' No, thou dost not think it, no ! ' 160
 And Japhet, being chafed, replied in heat,
 ' And wherefore ? if ye say of what is sworn,
 " He will not do it," shall it be more hard
 For future men, if any talk on it,
 To say, " He did not do it " ? ' They replied,
 With laughter, ' Lo you ! he is stout with us.
 And yet he cowered before the poor old snake.
 Sirrah, when you are saved, we pray you now
 To bear our might in mind—do, sirrah, do ;
 And likewise tell your sons, " ' The Cedar Tree ' 170
 Was a good giant, for he struck me not,
 Though he was young and full of sport, and though
 I taunted him." '

With that they also passed.
 But there remained who with the shipwright spoke :
 ' How wilt thou certify to us thy truth ? '
 And he related to them all his ways
 From the beginning : of the Voice that called ;
 Moreover, how the ship of doom was built.

And one made answer, ' Shall the mighty God
 Talk with a man of wooden beams and bars ? 180
 No, thou mad preacher, no. If He, Eterne,
 Be ordering of His far infinitudes,
 And darkness cloud a world, it is but chance,
 As if the shadow of His hand had fallen
 On one that He forgot, and troubled it.'

Then said the Master, ' Yet—who told thee so ? '

And from his daïs the feigning serpent hissed :
 ' Preacher, the light within, it was that shined,
 And told him so. The pious will have dread
 Him to declare such as ye rashly told. 190
 The course of God is one. It likes not us
 To think of Him as being acquaint with change :
 It were beneath Him. Nay, the finished earth
 Is left to her great masters. They must rule ;
 They do ; and I have set myself between,—
 A visible thing for worship, sith His face
 (For He is hard) He showeth not to men.
 Yea, I have set myself 'twixt God and man,
 To be interpreter, and teach mankind
 A pious lesson by my piety. 200
 He loveth not, nor hateth, nor desires—
 It were beneath Him.'

And the Master said,
 ' Thou liest. Thou wouldst lie away the world,
 If He, whom thou hast dared to speak against,
 Would suffer it.' ' I may not chide with thee,'
 It answered, ' now ; but if there come such time
 As thou hast prophesied, as I now reign
 In all men's sight, shall my dominion then
 Reach to be mighty in their souls. Thou too
 Shalt feel it, prophet.' And he lowered his head. 210

Then quoth the Leader of the young men : ' Sir,
 We scorn you not ; speak further ; yet our thought
 First answer. Not but by a miracle
 Can this thing be. The fashion of the world
 We heretofore have never known to change ;
 And will God change it now ? '

He then replied :
 ' What is thy thought ? THERE IS NO MIRACLE ?
 There is a great one, which thou hast not read,
 And never shalt escape. Thyself, O man,
 Thou art the miracle. Lo, if thou sayest, 220
 " I am one, and fashioned like the gracious world,
 Red clay is all my make, myself, my whole,
 And not my habitation," then thy sleep

Shall give thee wings to play among the rays
 O' the morning. If thy thought be, "I am one—
 A spirit among spirits—and the world
 A dream my spirit dreameth of, my dream
 Being all," the dominating mountains strong
 Shall not for that forbear to take thy breath,
 And rage with all their winds, and beat thee back, 230
 And beat thee down when thou wouldst set thy feet
 Upon their awful crests. Aye, thou thyself,
 Being in the world and of the world, thyself
 Hast breathed in breath from Him that made the world.
 Thou dost inherit, as thy Maker's son,
 That which He is, and that which He hath made :
 Thou art thy Father's copy of Himself,—
 THOU art thy FATHER'S MIRACLE.

‘ Behold,
 He buildeth up the stars in companies ;
 He made for them a law. To man He said, 240
 “Freely I give thee freedom.” What remains ?
 O, it remains, if thou, the image of God,
 Wilt reason well, that thou shalt know His ways ;
 But first thou must be loyal—love, O man,
 Thy Father—hearken when He pleads with thee,
 For there is something left of Him e'en now,—
 A witness for thy Father in thy soul,
 Albeit thy better state thou hast forgone.

‘ Now, then, be still, and think not in thy soul,
 “The rivers in their course for ever run, 250
 And turn not from it. He is like to them
 Who made them.” Think the rather, “With my foot
 I have turned the rivers from their ancient way,
 To water grasses that were fading. What !
 Is God my Father as the river wave,
 That yet descendeth, like the lesser thing
 He made, and not like me, a living son,
 That changed the water-course to suit his will ? ”

‘ Man is the miracle in nature. God
 Is the ONE MIRACLE to man. Behold, 260
 “There is a God,” thou sayest. Thou sayest well :
 In that thou sayest all. To Be is more

Of wonderful, than being, to have wrought,
Or reigned, or rested.

Hold then there, content ;
Learn that to love is the one way to know,
Or God or man : it is not love received
That maketh man to know the inner life
Of them that love him ; his own love bestowed
Shall do it. Love thy Father, and no more
His doings shall be strange. Thou shalt not fret 270
At any counsel, then, that He will send,—
No, nor rebel, albeit He have with thee
Great reservations. Know, to Be is more
Than to have acted ; yea, or after rest
And patience, to have risen and been wroth,
Broken the sequence of an ordered earth,
And troubled nations.'

Then the dragon sighed.
' Poor fanatic,' quoth he, ' thou speakest well.
Would I were like thee, for thy faith is strong,
Albeit thy senses wander. Yea, good sooth, 280
My masters, let us not despise, but learn
Fresh loyalty from this poor loyal soul.
Let us go forth—(myself will also go
To head you)—and do sacrifice ; for that,
We know, is pleasing to the mighty God :
But as for building many arks of wood,
O majesties ! when He shall counsel you
HIMSELF, then build. What say you, shall it be
An hundred oxen—fat, well liking, white ?
An hundred ? why, a thousand were not much 290
To such as you.' Then Noah lift up his arms
To heaven, and cried, ' Thou aged shape of sin,
The Lord rebuke thee.'

BOOK VIII

THEN one ran, crying, while Niloiya wrought,
' The Master cometh ! ' and she went within
To adorn herself for meeting him. And Shem
Went forth and talked with Japhet in the field,
And said, ' Is it well, my brother ? ' He replied,
' Well ! and, I pray you, is it well at home ? '

But Shem made answer, ' Can a house be well,
 If he that should command it bides afar ?
 Yet well is thee, because a fair free maid
 Is found to wed thee ; and they bring her in 10
 This day at sundown. Therefore is much haste
 To cover thick with costly webs the floor,
 And pluck and cover thick the same with leaves
 Of all sweet herbs—I warrant, ye shall hear
 No footfall where she treadeth ; and the seats
 Are ready, spread with robes ; the tables set
 With golden baskets, red pomegranates shred
 To fill them ; and the rubied censers smoke,
 Heaped up with ambergris and cinnamon,
 And frankincense and cedar.'

Japhet said, 20

' I will betroth her to me straight ; ' and went
 (Yet laboured he with sore disquietude)
 To gather grapes, and reap and bind the sheaf
 For his betrothal. And his brother spake,
 ' Where is our father ? doth he preach to-day ? '
 And Japhet answered, ' Yea. He said to me,
 " Go forward ; I will follow when the folk
 By yonder mountain-hold I shall have warned." '

And Shem replied, ' How thinkest thou ?—thine ears
 Have heard him oft.' He answered, ' I do think 30
 These be the last days of this old fair world.'

Then he did tell him of the giant folk :
 How they, than he, were taller by the head ;
 How one must stride that will ascend the steps
 That lead to their wide halls ; and how they drave,
 With manful shouts, the mammoth to the north ;
 And how the talking dragon lied and fawned,
 They seated proudly on their ivory thrones,
 And scorning him : and of their peaked hoods,
 And garments wrought upon, each with the tale 40
 Of him that wore it—all his manful deeds :
 (Yea, and about their skirts were effigies
 Of kings that they had slain ; and some, whose swords
 Many had pierced, wore vestures all of red,
 To signify much blood) : and of their pride

He told, but of the vision in the tent
He told him not.

And when they reached the house,
Niloiya met them, and to Japhet cried,
' All hail, right fortunate ! Lo, I have found
A maid. And now thou hast done well to reap 50
The late ripe corn.' So he went in with her,
And she did talk with him right motherly :
' It hath been fully told me how ye loathed
To wed thy father's slave ; yea, she herself,
Did she not all declare to me ? '

He said,
' Yet is thy damsel fair, and wise of heart.
' Yea,' quoth his mother ; ' she made clear to me
How ye did weep, my son, and ye did vow,
' I will not take her ! ' Now it was not I
That wrought to have it so.' And he replied, 60
' I know it.' Quoth the mother, ' It is well ;
For that same cause is laughter in my heart.'
' But she is sweet of language,' Japhet said.
' Aye,' quoth Niloiya, ' and thy wife no less
Whom thou shalt wed anon—forsooth, anon—
It is a lucky hour. Thou wilt ? ' He said,
' I will.' And Japhet laid the slender sheaf
From off his shoulder, and he said, ' Behold,
My father ! ' Then Niloiya turned herself,
And lo ! the shipwright stood. ' All hail ! ' quoth she,
And bowed herself, and kissed him on the mouth ; 71
But while she spake with him, sorely he sighed ;
And she did hang about his neck the robe
Of feasting, and she poured upon his hands
Clear water, and anointed him, and set
Before him bread.

And Japhet said to him,
' My father, my belovèd, wilt thou yet
Be sad because of scorning ? Eat this day ;
For as an angel in their eyes thou art
Who stand before thee.' But he answered, ' Peace ! 80
Thy words are wide.'

And when Niloiya heard,
She said, ' Is this a time for mirth of heart
And wine ? Behold, I thought to wed my son,

Even this Japhet ; but is this a time,
When sad is he to whom is my desire,
And lying under sorrow as from God ? ’

He answered, ‘ Yea, it is a time of times ;
Bring in the maid.’ Niloiya said, ‘ The maid
That first I spoke on, shall not Japhet wed ;
It likes not her, nor yet it likes not me.
But I have found another ; yea, good sooth,
The damsel will not tarry, she will come
With all her slaves by sundown.’

90

And she said,
‘ Comfort thy heart, and eat : moreover, know
How that thy great work even to-day is done.
Sir, thy great ship is finished, and the folk
(For I, according to thy will, have paid
All that was left us to them for their wage)
Have brought, as to a storehouse, flour of wheat,
Honey and oil—much victual ; yea, and fruits,
Curtains and household gear. And, sir, they say
It is thy will to take it for thy hold
Our fastness and abode.’ He answered, ‘ Yea,
Else wherefore was it built ? ’ She said, ‘ Good sir,
I pray you make us not the whole earth’s scorn.
And now, to-morrow in thy father’s house
Is a great feast, and weddings are toward ;
Let be the ship, till after, for thy words
Have ever been, “ If God shall send a flood,
There will I dwell ; ” I pray you therefore wait
At least till He DOTH send it.’

100

110

And he turned,
And answered nothing. Now the sun was low
While yet she spake ; and Japhet came to them
In goodly raiment, and upon his arm
The garment of betrothal. And with that
A noise, and then brake in a woman slave
And Amarant. This, with folding of her hands,
Did say full meekly, ‘ If I do offend,
Yet have not I been willing to offend ;
For now this woman will not be denied
Herself to tell her errand.’

120

And they sat.

Then spoke the woman, ' If I do offend,
Pray you forgive the bonds slave, for her tongue
Is for her mistress. " Lo," my mistress saith,
" Put off thy bravery, bridegroom ; fold away,
Mother, thy webs of pride, thy costly robes
Woven of many colours. We have heard
Thy master. Lo, to-day right evil things
He prophesied to us, that were his friends ;
Therefore, my answer :—God do so to me ; 130
Yea, God do so to me, more also, more
Than he did threaten, if my damsel's foot
Ever draw nigh thy door." '

And when she heard,

Niloiya sat amazed, in grief of soul.
But Japhet came unto the slave, where low
She bowed herself for fear. He said, ' Depart ;
Say to thy mistress, " It is well." ' With that
She turned herself, and she made haste to flee,
Lest any, for those evil words she brought,
Would smite her. But the bondmaid of the house 140
Lift up her hand and said, ' If I offend,
It was not of my heart : thy damsel knew
Nought of this matter.' And he held to her
His hand and touched her, and said, ' Amarant ! '
And when she looked upon him, she did take
And spread before her face her radiant locks,
Trembling. And Japhet said, ' Lift up thy face,
O fairest of the daughters, thy fair face ;
For, lo ! the bridegroom standeth with the robe
Of thy betrothal ! '—and he took her locks 150
In his two hands to part them from her brow,
And laid them on her shoulders ; and he said,
' Sweet are the blushes of thy face,' and put
The robe upon her, having said, ' Behold,
I have repented me ; and oft by night,
In the waste wilderness, while all things slept,
I thought upon thy words, for they were sweet.

' For this I make thee free. And now thyself
Art loveliest in mine eyes ; I look, and lo !
Thou art of beauty more than any thought 160

I had concerning thee. Let, then, this robe,
 Wrought on with imagery of fruitful bough,
 And graceful leaf, and birds with tender eyes,
 Cover the ripples of thy tawny hair.'
 So when she held her peace, he brought her nigh
 To hear the speech of wedlock ; aye, he took
 The golden cup of wine to drink with her,
 And laid the sheaf upon her arms. He said,
 ' Like as my fathers in the older days
 Led home the daughters whom they chose, do I ; 170
 Like as they said, " Mine honour have I set
 Upon thy head ! " do I. Eat of my bread,
 Rule in my house, be mistress of my slaves,
 And mother of my children.'

And he brought
 The damsel to his father, saying, ' Behold
 My wife ! I have betrothed her to myself ;
 I pray you, kiss her.' And the Master did :
 He said, ' Be mother of a multitude,
 And let them to their father even so
 Be found, as he is found to me.'

With that 180
 She answered, ' Let this woman, sir, find grace
 And favour in your sight.'

And Japhet said,
 ' Sweet mother, I have wed the maid ye chose
 And brought me first. I leave her in thy hand ;
 Have care on her, till I shall come again
 And ask her of thee.' So they went apart,
 He and his father, to the marriage feast.

BOOK IX

THE prayer of Noah. The man went forth by night
 And listened ; and the earth was dark and still,
 And he was driven of his great distress
 Into the forest ; but the birds of night
 Sang sweetly ; and he fell upon his face,
 And cried, ' God, God ! Thy billows and Thy waves
 Have swallowed up my soul.

‘ Where is my God ?

For I have somewhat yet to plead with Thee ;
For I have walked the strands of Thy great deep,
Heard the dull thunder of its rage afar, 10
And its dread moaning. Oh, the field is sweet—
Spare it. The delicate woods make white their trees
With blossom—spare them. Life is sweet ; behold
There is much cattle, and the wild and tame,
Father, do feed in quiet—spare them.

‘ God !

Where is my God ? The long wave doth not rear
Her ghostly crest to lick the forest up,
And like a chief in battle fall—not yet.
The lightnings pour not down, from ragged holes
In heaven, the torment of their forkèd tongues, 20
And, like fell serpents, dart and sting—not yet.
The winds awake not, with their awful wings
To winnow, even as chaff, from out their track,
All that withstandeth, and bring down the pride
Of all things strong and all things high—

‘ Not yet.

Oh, let it not be yet. Where is my God ?
How am I saved, if I and mine be saved
Alone ? I am not saved, for I have loved
My country and my kin. Must I, Thy thrall,
Over their lands be lord when they are gone ? 30
I would not : spare them, Mighty. Spare Thyself,
For Thou dost love them greatly,—and if not . . .’

Another praying unremote, a Voice
Calm as the solitude between wide stars.

‘ Where is my God, who loveth this lost world—
Lost from its place and name, but won for Thee ?
Where is my multitude, my multitude,
That I shall gather ? ’ And white smoke went up
From incense that was burning, but there gleamed 40
No light of fire, save dimly to reveal
The whiteness rising, as the prayer of him
That mourned. ‘ My God, appear for me, appear ;
Give me my multitude, for it is mine.
The bitterness of death I have not feared,

To-morrow shall Thy courts, O God, be full.
 Then shall the captive from his bonds go free,
 Then shall the thrall find rest, that knew not rest
 From labour and from blows. The sorrowful—
 That said of joy, “What is it?” and of songs,
 ‘We have not heard them’—shall be glad and sing;
 Then shall the little ones that knew not Thee, 51
 And such as heard not of Thee, see Thy face,
 And seeing, dwell content.’

The prayer of Noah.

He cried out in the darkness, ‘Hear, O God,
 Hear HIM: hear this one; through the gates of death,
 If life be all past praying for, O give
 To Thy great multitude a way to peace;
 Give them to HIM.

‘But yet,’ said he, ‘O yet,
 If there be respite for the terrible,
 The proud, yea, such as scorn Thee—and if not . . . 60
 Let not mine eyes behold their fall.’

He cried,
 ‘Forgive. I have not done Thy work, Great Judge,
 With a perfect heart; I have but half believed,
 While in accustomed language I have warned;
 And now there is no more to do, no place
 For my repentance, yea, no hour remains
 For doing of that work again. Oh, lost,
 Lost world!’ And while he prayed, the daylight
 dawned

And Noah went up into the ship, and sat
 Before the Lord. And all was still; and now 70
 In that great quietness the sun came up,
 And there were marks across it, as it were
 The shadow of a Hand upon the sun—
 Three fingers dark and dread, and afterward
 There rose a white thick mist, that peacefully
 Folded the fair earth in her funeral shroud,
 The earth that gave no token, save that now
 There fell a little trembling under foot.
 And Noah went down, and took and hid his face

Behind his mantle, saying, ' I have made 80
 Great preparation, and it may be yet,
 Beside my house, whom I did charge to come
 This day to meet me, there may enter in
 Many that yesternight thought scorn of all
 My bidding.' And because the fog was thick,
 He said, ' Forbid it, Heaven, if such there be,
 That they should miss the way.' And even then
 There was a noise of weeping and lament ;
 The words of them that were affrighted, yea,
 And cried for grief of heart. There came to him 90
 The mother and her children, and they cried,
 ' Speak, father, what is this ? What hast thou done ? '
 And when he lifted up his face, he saw
 Japhet, his well-belovèd, where he stood
 Apart ; and Amarant leaned upon his breast,
 And hid her face, for she was sore afraid ;
 And lo ! the robes of her betrothal gleamed
 White in the deadly gloom.

And at his feet

The wives of his two other sons did kneel,
 And wring their hands.

One cried, ' O, speak to us ;

We are affrighted ; we have dreamed a dream, 101
 Each to herself. For me, I saw in mine
 The grave old angels, like to shepherds, walk,
 Much cattle following them. Thy daughter looked,
 And they did enter here.'

The other lay

And moaned, ' Alas ! O father, for my dream
 Was evil : lo, I heard when it was dark,
 I heard two wicked ones contend for me.
 One said, " And wherefore should this woman live,
 When only for her children, and for her, 110
 Is woe and degradation ? " Then he laughed,
 The other crying, " Let alone, O prince ;
 Hinder her not to live and bear much seed.
 Because I hate her." '

But he said, ' Rise up,

Daughters of Noah, for I have learned no words
 To comfort you.' Then spake her lord to her,

‘ Peace ! or I swear that for thy dream, myself
Will hate thee also.’

And Niloiya said,
‘ My sons, if one of you will hear my words,
Go now, look out, and tell me of the day,
How fares it ? ’

120

And the fateful darkness grew.
But Shem went up to do his mother’s will ;
And all was one as though the frightened earth
Quivered and fell a-trembling ; then they hid
Their faces every one, till he returned,
And spake not. ‘ Nay,’ they cried, ‘ what hast thou seen ?
Oh, is it come to this ? ’ He answered them,
‘ The door is shut.’

CONTRASTED SONGS

SAILING BEYOND SEAS

(Old Style)

METHOUGHT the stars were blinking bright,
 And the old brig's sails unfurled ;
 I said, ' I will sail to my love this night
 At the other side of the world.'
 I stepped aboard—we sailed so fast—
 The sun shot up from the bourne ;
 But a dove that perched upon the mast
 Did mourn, and mourn, and mourn.
 ' O fair dove ! O fond dove !
 And dove with the white breast,
 Let me alone, the dream is my own,
 And my heart is full of rest.

My true love fares on this great hill,
 Feeding his sheep for ay ;'
 I looked in his hut, but all was still,
 My love was gone away.
 I went to gaze in the forest creek,
 And the dove mourned on apace ;
 No flame did flash, nor fair blue reek
 Rose up to show me his place.
 ' O last love ! O first love !
 My love with the true heart,
 To think I have come to this your home,
 And yet—we are apart !'

My love ! He stood at my right hand,
 His eyes were grave and sweet.
 Methought he said, ' In this far land,
 O, is it thus we meet !

Ah, maid most dear, I am not here ;
I have no place—no part—
No dwelling more by sea or shore,
But only in thy heart.’
O fair dove ! O fond dove !
Till night rose over the bourne,
The dove on the mast, as we sailed fast,
Did mourn, and mourn, and mourn.

REMONSTRANCE

DAUGHTERS of Eve ! your mother did not well :
She laid the apple in your father’s hand,
And we have read, O wonder ! what befell—
The man was not deceived, nor yet could stand ;
He chose to lose, for love of her, his throne—
With her could die, but could not live alone.

Daughters of Eve ! he did not fall so low,
Nor fall so far, as that sweet woman fell ;
For something better, than as gods to know,
That husband in that home left off to dwell :
For this, till love be reckoned, less than lore,
Shall man be first and best for evermore.

Daughters of Eve ! it was for your dear sake
The world’s first hero died an uncrown’d king ;
But God’s great pity touched the grand mistake,
And made his married love a sacred thing :
For yet his nobler sons, if aught be true,
Find the lost Eden in their love to you.

SONG FOR THE NIGHT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

(*A Humble Imitation*)

'And birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.'

It is the noon of night,
And the world's Great Light
Gone out, she widow-like doth carry her :
The moon hath veiled her face,
Nor looks on that dread place
Where He lieth dead in sealèd sepulchre ;
And heaven and hades, emptied, lend
Their flocking multitudes to watch and wait the end.

Tier above tier they rise,
Their wings new line the skies,
And shed out comforting light among the stars ;
But they of the other place
The heavenly signs deface,
The gloomy brand of hell their brightness mars ;
Yet high they sit in thronèd state—
It is the hour of darkness to them dedicate.

And first and highest set,
Where the black shades are met,
The lord of night and hades leans him down ;
His gleaming eyeballs show
More awful than the glow,
Which hangeth by the points of his dread crown ;
And at his feet, where lightnings play,
The fatal sisters sit and weep, and curse their day.

Lo ! one, with eyes all wide,
As she were sight denied,
Sits blindly feeling at her distaff old ;
One, as distraught with woe,
Letting the spindle go,
Her star-ysprinkled gown doth shivering fold ;
And one right mournful hangs her head,
Complaining, ' Woe is me ! I may not cut the thread.

' All men of every birth,
 Yea, great ones of the earth,
 Kings and their councillors, have I drawn down ;
 But I am held of Thee,—
 Why dost Thou trouble me,
 To bring me up, dead King, that keep'st Thy crown ?
 Yet for all courtiers hast but ten
 Lowly, unlettered, Galilean fishermen.

' Olympian heights are bare
 Of whom men worshipped there,
 Immortal feet their snows may print no more ;
 Their stately powers below
 Lie desolate, nor know
 This thirty years Thessalian grove or shore ;
 But I am elder far than they ;—
 Where is the sentence writ that I must pass away ?

' Art thou come up for this,
 Dark regent, awful Dis ?
 And hast thou moved the deep to mark our ending ?
 And stirred the dens beneath,
 To see us eat of death,
 With all the scoffing heavens toward us bending ?
 Help ! powers of ill, see not us die !'
 But neither demon dares, nor angel deigns, reply.

Her sisters, fallen on sleep,
 Fade in the upper deep,
 And their grim lord sits on, in doleful trance ;
 Till her black veil she rends,
 And with her death-shriek bends
 Downward the terrors of her countenance ;
 Then, whelmed in night and no more seen,
 They leave the world a doubt if ever such have been.

And the winged armies twain
 Their awful watch maintain ;
 They mark the earth at rest with her Great Dead.
 Behold, from Antres wide,
 Green Atlas heave his side ;
 His moving woods their scarlet clusters shed,
 The swathing coif his front that cools,
 And tawny lions lapping at his palm-edged pools.

Then like a heap of snow,
Lying where the grasses grow,
See glimmering, while the moony lustres creep,
Mild mannered Athens, dight
In dewy marbles white,
Among her goddesses and gods asleep ;
And swaying on a purple sea,
The many moored galleys clustering at her quay.
Also, 'neath palm trees' shade,
Amid their camels laid,
The pastoral tribes with all their flocks at rest ;
Like to those old-world folk,
With whom two angels broke
The bread of men at Abram's courteous 'quest,
When, listening as they prophesied,
His desert princess, being reproved, her laugh denied.

Or from the Morians' land
See worshipped Nilus bland,
Taking the silver road he gave the world,
To wet his ancient shrine
With waters held divine,
And touch his temple steps with wavelets curled,
And list, ere darkness change to grey,
Old minstrel-throated Memnon chanting in the day.

Moreover, Indian glades,
Where kneel the sun-swart maids,
On Gunga's flood their votive flowers to throw,
And launch i' the sultry night
Their burning cressets bright,
Most like a fleet of stars that southing go,
Till on her bosom prosperously
She floats them shining forth to sail the lullèd sea.

Nor bend they not their eyne
Where the watch-fires shine,
By shepherds fed, on hills of Bethlehem :
They mark, in goodly wise,
The city of David rise,
The gates and towers of rare Jerusalem ;
And hear the 'scapèd Kedron fret,
And night dews dropping from the leaves of Olivet.

But now the setting moon
To curtained lands must soon,
In her obedient fashion, minister ;
She first, as loth to go,
Lest her last silver flow
Upon her Master's sealèd sepulchre ;
And trees that in the garden spread,
She kisseth all for sake of His low-lying head,
Then 'neath the rim goes down ;
And night with darker frown
Sinks on the fateful garden watchèd long ;
When some despairing eyes,
Far in the murky skies,
The unwishèd waking by their gloom foretell ;
And blackness up the welkin swings,
And drinks the mild effulgence from celestial wings.

Last, with amazèd cry,
The hosts asunder fly,
Leaving an empty gulf of blackest hue ;
Whence straightway shooteth down,
By the Great Father thrown,
A mighty angel, strong and dread to view ;
And at his fall the rocks are rent,
The waiting world doth quake with mortal trembling ;

The regions far and near
Quail with a pause of fear,
More terrible than aught since time began ;
The winds, that dare not fleet,
Drop at his awful feet,
And in its bed wails the wide ocean ;
The flower of dawn forbears to blow,
And the oldest running river cannot skill to flow.

At stand, by that dread place,
He lifts his radiant face,
And looks to heaven with reverent love and fear ;
Then, while the welkin quakes,
And muttering thunder breaks,
And lightnings shoot and ominous meteors drear,
And all the daunted earth doth moan,
He from the doors of death rolls back the sealèd stone.—

—In regal quiet deep,
Lo, One new waked from sleep !
Behold, He standeth in the rock-hewn door !
Thy children shall not die—
Peace, peace, thy Lord is by !
He liveth !—they shall live for evermore.
Peace ! lo, He lifts a priestly hand,
And blesseth all the sons of men in every land.

Then, with great dread and wail,
Fall down, like storms of hail,
The legions of the lost in fearful wise ;
And they whose blissful race
Peoples the better place,
Lift up their wings to cover their fair eyes,
And through the waxing saffron brede,
Till they are lost in light, recede, and yet recede.

So while the fields are dim,
And the red sun his rim
First heaves, in token of his reign benign,
All stars the most admired,
Into their blue retired,
Lie hid—the faded moon forgets to shine,—
And, hurrying down the sphery way,
Night flies, and sweeps her shadow from the paths of day.

But look ! the Saviour blest,
Calm after solemn rest,
Stands in the garden 'neath His olive boughs ;
The earliest smile of day
Doth on His vesture play,
And light the majesty of His still brows ;
While angels hang with wings outspread,
Holding the new-won crown above His saintly head.

SONG OF MARGARET

AYE, I saw her, we have met,—
Married eyes how sweet they be—
Are you happier, Margaret,
Than you might have been with me ?
Silence ! make no more ado !
Did she think I should forget ?
Matters nothing, though I knew,
Margaret, Margaret.

Once those eyes, full sweet, full shy,
Told a certain thing to mine ;
What they told me I put by,
O, so careless of the sign.
Such an easy thing to take,
And I did not want it then ;
Fool ! I wish my heart would break.
Scorn is hard on hearts of men.

Scorn of self is bitter work—
Each of us has felt it now :
Bluest skies she counted mirk,
Self-betrayed of eyes and brow ;
As for me, I went my way,
And a better man drew nigh,
Fain to earn, with long essay,
What the winner's hand threw by.

Matters not in deserts old,
What was born, and waxed, and yearned,
Year to year its meaning told,
I am come—its deeps are learned—
Come, but there is nought to say,—
Married eyes with mine have met.
Silence ! O, I had my day,
Margaret, Margaret.

SONG OF THE GOING AWAY

‘ OLD man, upon the green hill-side,
 With yellow flowers besprinkled o’er,
 How long in silence wilt thou bide
 At this low stone door ?

‘ I stoop : within ’t is dark and still ;
 But shadowy paths methinks there be,
 And lead they far into the hill ? ’
 ‘ Traveller, come and see.’

‘ ’T is dark, ’t is cold, and hung with gloom ;
 I care not now within to stay ;
 For thee and me is scarcely room,
 I will hence away.’

‘ Not so, not so, thou youthful guest,
 Thy foot shall issue forth no more :
 Behold the chamber of thy rest,
 And the closing door ! ’

‘ Oh ! have I ’scaped the whistling ball,
 And striven on smoky fields of fight,
 And scaled the ’leaguered city’s wall
 In the dangerous night ;

‘ And borne my life unharmèd still
 Through foaming gulfs of yeasty spray,
 To yield it on a grassy hill
 At the noon of day ? ’

‘ Peace ! Say thy prayers, and go to sleep,
 Till *some time*, ONE my seal shall break,
 And deep shall answer unto deep,
 When He crieth, “ AWAKE ! ” ’

A LILY AND A LUTE

(Song of the uncommunicated Ideal)

I

I OPENED the eyes of my soul.

And behold,
 A white river-lily : a lily awake, and aware—
 For she set her face upward—aware how in scarlet and
 gold
 A long wrinkled cloud, left behind of the wandering air,
 Lay over with fold upon fold,
 With fold upon fold.

And the blushing sweet shame of the cloud made her
 also ashamed,
 The white river-lily, that suddenly knew she was fair ;
 And over the far-away mountains that no man hath
 named,
 And that no foot hath trod, 10
 Flung down out of heavenly places, there fell, as it were,
 A rose-bloom, a token of love, that should make them
 endure,
 Withdrawn in snow silence for ever, who keep them-
 selves pure,
 And look up to God.

Then I said, ' In rosy air,
 Cradled on thy reaches fair,
 While the blushing early ray
 Whitens into perfect day,
 River-lily, sweetest known,
 Art thou set for me alone ?
 Nay, but I will bear thee far,
 Where yon clustering steeples are,
 And the bells ring out o'erhead,
 And the stated prayers are said ;
 And the busy farmers pace,
 Trading in the market place ;
 And the country lasses sit
 By their butter, praising it ;

And the latest news is told,
While the fruit and cream are sold ; 30
And the friendly gossips greet,
Up and down the sunny street.
For,' I said, ' I have not met,
White one, any folk as yet
Who would send no blessing up,
Looking on a face like thine ;
For thou art as Joseph's cup,
And by thee might they divine.

' Nay ! but thou a spirit art ;
Men shall take thee in the mart 40
For the ghost of their best thought,
Raised at noon, and near them brought ;
Or the prayer they made last night,
Set before them all in white.'

And I put out my rash hand,
For I thought to draw to land
The white lily. Was it fit
Such a blossom should expand,
Fair enough for a world's wonder,
And no mortal gather it ? 50
No. I strove, and it went under,
And I drew, but it went down ;
And the waterweeds' long tresses,
And the overlapping cresses,
Sullied its admired crown.
Then along the river strand,
Trailing, wrecked, it came to land,
Of its beauty half despoiled,
And its snowy pureness soiled :
O ! I took it in my hand,— 60
You will never see it now,
White and golden as it grew :
No, I cannot show it you,
Nor the cheerful town endow
With the freshness of its brow.

If a royal painter, great
With the colours dedicate

To a dove's neck, a sea-bight,
 And the flickerings over white
 Mountain summits far away— 70
 One content to give his mind
 To the enrichment of mankind,
 And the laying up of light
 In men's houses—on that day,
 Could have passed in kingly mood,
 Would he ever have endued
 Canvas with the peerless thing,
 In the grace that it did bring,
 And the light that o'er it flowed,
 With the pureness that it showed, 80
 And the pureness that it meant ?
 Could he skill to make it seen
 As he saw ? For this, I ween,
 He were likewise impotent.

II

I opened the doors of my heart.

And behold,
 There was music within and a song,
 And echoes did feed on the sweetness, repeating it long.
 I opened the doors of my heart : and behold,
 There was music that played itself out in eolian notes ;
 Then was heard, as a far-away bell at long intervals
 toll'd, 90

That murmurs and floats,
 And presently dieth, forgotten of forest and wold,
 And comes in all passion again, and a tremblement soft
 That maketh the listener full oft
 To whisper, ' Ah ! would I might hear it for ever and
 ay,

When I toil in the heat of the day,
 When I walk in the cold.'

I opened the door of my heart. And behold,
 There was music within, and a song.
 But while I was hearkening, lo, blackness without, thick
 and strong, 100

Came up and came over, and all that sweet fluting was drowned,

I could hear it no more ;

For the welkin was moaning, the waters were stirred on the shore,

And trees in the dark all around

Were shaken. It thundered. ' Hark, hark ! there is thunder to-night !

The sullen long wave rears her head, and comes down with a will ;

The awful white tongues are let loose, and the stars are all dead ;—

There is thunder ! it thunders ! and ladders of light

Run up. There is thunder ! ' I said,

' Loud thunder ! it thunders ! and up in the dark over-head, 110

A down-pouring cloud, (there is thunder !) a down-pouring cloud

Hails out her fierce message, and quivers the deep in its bed,

And cowers the earth held at bay ; and they mutter aloud,

And pause with an ominous tremble, till, great in their rage,

The heavens and earth come together, and meet with a crash ;

And the fight is so fell as if Time had come down with the flash,

And the story of life was all read,

And the Giver had turned the last page.

' Now their bar the pent water-floods lash,

And the forest trees give out their language austere with great age ; 120

And there flieth o'er moor and o'er hill,

And there heaveth at intervals wide,

The long sob of nature's great passion as loth to subside,

Until quiet drop down on the tide,

And mad Echo hath moaned herself still.'

Lo ! or ever I was 'ware,

In the silence of the air,

Through my heart's wide-open door,
 Music floated forth once more,
 Floated to the world's dark rim, 130
 And looked over with a hymn ;
 Then came home with flutings fine,
 And discoursed in tones divine
 Of a certain grief of mine ;
 And went downward and went in,
 Glimpses of my soul to win,
 And discovered such a deep
 That I could not choose but weep,
 For it lay, a land-locked sea,
 Fathomless and dim to me. 140

O, the song ! it came and went,
 Went and came.

I have not learned
 Half the lore whereto it yearned,
 Half the magic that it meant.
 Water booming in a cave ;
 Or the swell of some long wave,
 Setting in from unrevealed
 Countries ; or a foreign tongue,
 Sweetly talked and deftly sung,
 While the meaning is half sealed ; 150
 May be like it. You have heard
 Also ;—can you find a word
 For the naming of such song ?
 No ; a name would do it wrong.
 You have heard it in the night,
 In the dropping rain's despite,
 In the midnight darkness deep,
 When the children were asleep,
 And the wife—no, let that be ;
 SHE asleep ! She knows right well 160
 What the song to you and me,
 While we breathe, can nearer tell ;
 She hath heard its faultless flow,
 Where the roots of music grow.

While I listened, like young birds,
 Hints were fluttering ; almost words—

Leaned and leaned, and nearer came ;—
Everything had changed its name.

Sorrow was a ship, I found,
Wrecked with them that in her are, 170
On an island richer far
Than the port where they were bound.
Fear was but the awful boom
Of the old great bell of doom,
Tolling, far from earthly air,
For all worlds to go to prayer.
Pain, that to us mortal clings,
But the pushing of our wings,
That we have no use for yet,
And the uprooting of our feet 180
From the soil where they are set,
And the land we reckon sweet.
Love in growth, the grand deceit
Whereby men the perfect greet ;
Love in wane, the blessing sent
To be (howsoe'er it went)
Never more with earth content.

O, full sweet, and O, full high,
Ran that music up the sky ;
But I cannot sing it you, 190
More than I can make you view,
With my paintings labial,
Sitting up in awful row,
White old men majestic,
Mountains, in their gowns of snow,
Ghosts of kings ; as my two eyes,
Looking over speckled skies,
See them now. About their knees,
Half in haze, there stands at ease
A great army of green hills, 200
Some bareheaded ; and, behold,
Small green mosses creep on some.
Those be mighty forests old ;
And white avalanches come
Through yon rents, where now distils
Sheeny silver, pouring down

To a tune of old renown,
Cutting narrow pathways through
Gentian belts of airy blue,
To a zone where starwort blows, 210
And long reaches of the rose.

So, that haze all left behind,
Down the chestnut forests wind,
Past yon jagged spires, where yet
Foot of man was never set ;
Past a castle yawning wide,
With a great breach in its side,
To a nest-like valley, where,
Like a sparrow's egg in hue,
Lie two lakes, and teach the true 220
Colour of the sea-maid's hair.

What beside ? The world beside !
Drawing down and down, to greet
Cottage clusters at our feet—
Every scent of summer tide—
Flowery pastures all aglow ;
(Men and women mowing go
Up and down them) ; also soft
Floating of the film aloft,
Fluttering of the leaves alow. 230
Is this told ? It is not told.
Where 's the danger ? where 's the cold
Slippery danger up the steep ?
Where yon shadow fallen asleep ?
Chirping bird and tumbling spray,
Light, work, laughter, scent of hay,
Peace, and echo, where are they ?

Ah, they sleep, sleep all untold ;
Memory must their grace enfold
Silently ; and that high song 240
Of the heart, it doth belong
To the hearers. Not a whit,
Though a chief musician heard,
Could he make a tune for it.

Though a lute full deftly strung,
 And the sweetest bird e'er sung,
 Could have tried it—O, the lute
 For that wondrous song were mute,
 And the bird would do her part,
 Falter, fail, and break her heart— 250
 Break her heart, and furl her wings,
 On the unexpressive strings.

GLADYS AND HER ISLAND

(On the Advantages of the Poetical Temperament)

AN IMPERFECT FABLE WITH A DOUBTFUL MORAL

O HAPPY Gladys ! I rejoice with her,
 For Gladys saw the island.

It was thus :

They gave a day for pleasure in the school
 Where Gladys taught ; and all the other girls
 Were taken out, to picnic in a wood.
 But it was said, ' We think it were not well
 That little Gladys should acquire a taste
 For pleasure, going about, and needless change.
 It would not suit her station : discontent
 Might come of it ; and all her duties now 10
 She does so pleasantly, that we were best
 To keep her humble.' So they said to her,
 ' Gladys, we shall not want you, all to-day.
 Look, you are free ; you need not sit at work :
 No, you may take a long and pleasant walk
 Over the sea-cliff, or upon the beach
 Among the visitors.'

Then Gladys blushed
 For joy, and thanked them. What ! a holiday,
 A whole one, for herself ! How good, how kind !
 With that, the marshalled carriages drove off ; 20
 And Gladys, sobered with her weight of joy,
 Stole out beyond the groups upon the beach—
 The children with their wooden spades, the band
 That played for lovers, and the sunny stir
 Of cheerful life and leisure—to the rocks,

For these she wanted most, and there was time
 To mark them ; how like ruined organs prone
 They lay, or leaned their giant fluted pipes,
 And let the great white-crested reckless wave
 Beat out their booming melody.

The sea 30

Was filled with light ; in clear blue caverns curled
 The breakers, and they ran, and seemed to romp,
 As playing at some rough and dangerous game,
 While all the nearer waves rushed in to help,
 And all the farther heaved their heads to peep,
 And tossed the fishing boats. Then Gladys laughed,
 And said, ' O, happy tide, to be so lost
 In sunshine, that one dare not look at it ;
 And lucky cliffs, to be so brown and warm ;
 And yet how lucky are the shadows, too, 40
 That lurk beneath their ledges. It is strange,
 That in remembrance though I lay them up,
 They are for ever, when I come to them,
 Better than I had thought. O, something yet
 I had forgotten. Oft I say, " At least
 This picture is imprinted ; thus and thus,
 The sharpened serried jags run up, run out,
 Layer on layer." And I look—up—up—
 High, higher up again, till far aloft
 They cut into their aether—brown, and clear, 50
 And perfect. And I, saying, " This is mine,
 To keep," retire ; but shortly come again,
 And they confound me with a glorious change.
 The low sun out of rain-clouds stares at them ;
 They redden, and their edges drip with—what ?
 I know not, but 'tis red. It leaves no stain,
 For the next morning they stand up like ghosts
 In a sea-shroud, and fifty thousand mews
 Sit there, in long white files, and chatter on,
 Like silly school-girls in their silliest mood. 60

' There is the boulder where we always turn.
 O ! I have longed to pass it ; now I will.
 What would THEY say ? for one must slip and spring ;
 " Young ladies ! Gladys ! I am shocked. My dears,
 Decorum, if you please : turn back at once.

Gladys, we blame you most ; you should have looked
Before you." Then they sigh—how kind they are !—

"What will become of you, if all your life
You look a long way off ?—look anywhere,
And everywhere, instead of at your feet, 70
And where they carry you ! " Ah, well, I know
It is a pity,' Gladys said ; ' but then
We cannot all be wise : happy for me,
That other people are.

' And yet I wish—

For sometimes very right and serious thoughts
Come to me—I do wish that they would come
When they are wanted !—when I teach the sums
On rainy days, and when the practising
I count to, and the din goes on and on,
Still the same tune and still the same mistake, 80

Then I am wise enough : sometimes I feel
Quite old. I think that it will last, and say,
" Now my reflections do me credit ! now
I am a woman ! " and I wish they knew
How serious all my duties look to me.

And how, my heart hushed down and shaded lies,
Just like the sea when low, convenient clouds,
Come over, and drink all its sparkles up.

But does it last ? Perhaps, that very day,
The front door opens : out we walk in pairs ; 90
And I am so delighted with this world,
That suddenly has grown, being new washed,
To such a smiling, clean, and thankful world,
And with a tender face shining through tears,
Looks up into the sometime lowering sky,
That has been angry, but is reconciled,
And just forgiving her, that I—that I—

O, I forget myself : what matters how !

' And then I hear (but always kindly said)
Some words that pain me so—but just, but true : 100

" For if your place in this establishment
Be but subordinate, and if your birth
Be lowly, it the more behoves—well, well,
No more. We see that you are sorry." Yes !
I am always sorry THEN ; but now—O, now,
Here is a bight more beautiful than all.'

'And did they scold her, then, my pretty one ?
 And did she want to be as wise as they,
 To bear a bucklered heart and priggish mind ?
 Aye, you may crow ; she did ! but no, no, no, 110
 The night-time will not let her, all the stars
 Say nay to that—the old sea laughs at her.
 Why, Gladys is a child ; she has not skill
 To shut herself within her own small cell,
 And build the door up, and to say, " Poor me !
 I am a prisoner ; " then to take hewn stones,
 And, having built the windows up, to say,
 " O, it is dark ! there is no sunshine here ;
 There never has been." '

Strange ! how very strange !
 A woman passing Gladys with a babe, 120
 To whom she spoke these words, and only looked
 Upon the babe, who crowed and pulled her curls,
 And never looked at Gladys, never once.
 ' A simple child,' she added, and went by,
 ' To want to change her greater for their less ;
 But Gladys shall not do it, no, not she ;
 We love her—do n't we ?—far too well for that.'

Then Gladys, flushed with shame and keen surprise,
 ' How could she be so near, and I not know ?
 And have I spoken out my thought aloud ? 130
 I must have done, forgetting. It is well
 She walks so fast, for I am hungry now,
 And here is water cantering down the cliff,
 And here a shell to catch it with, and here
 The round plump buns they gave me, and the fruit.
 Now she is gone behind the rock. O, rare
 To be alone ! ' So Gladys sat her down,
 Unpacked her little basket, ate and drank,
 Then pushed her hands into the warm dry sand,
 And thought the earth was happy, and she too 140
 Was going round with it in happiness,
 That holiday. ' What was it that she said ? '
 Quoth Gladys, cogitating ; ' they were kind,
 The words that woman spoke. She does not know !
 " Her greater for their less "—it makes me laugh—
 But yet,' sighed Gladys, ' though it must be good

To look and to admire, one should not wish
To steal THEIR virtues, and to put them on,
Like feathers from another wing ; beside,
That calm, and that grave consciousness of worth, 150
When all is said, would little suit with me,
Who am not worthy. When our thoughts are born,
Though they be good and humble, one should mind
How they are reared, or some will go astray
And shame their mother. Cain and Abel both
Were only once removed from innocence.
Why did I envy them ? That was not good ;
Yet it began with my humility.'

But as she spake, lo, Gladys raised her eyes,
And right before her, on the horizon's edge, 160
Behold, an island ! First, she looked away
Along the solid rocks and steadfast shore,
For she was all amazed, believing not,
And then she looked again, and there again
Behold, an island ! And the tide had turned,
The milky sea had got a purple rim,
And from the rim that mountain island rose,
Purple, with two high peaks, the northern peak
The higher, and with fell and precipice,
It ran down steeply to the water's brink ; 170
But all the southern line was long and soft,
Broken with tender curves, and, as she thought,
Covered with forest or with sward. But, look !
The sun was on the island ; and he showed
On either peak a dazzling cap of snow.
Then Gladys held her breath ; she said, ' Indeed,
Indeed it is an island : how is this,
I never saw it till this fortunate
Rare holiday ? ' And while she strained her eyes,
She thought that it began to fade ; but not 180
To change as clouds do, only to withdraw
And melt into its azure ; and at last, *
Little by little, from her hungry heart,
That longed to draw things marvellous to itself,
And yearned towards the riches and the great
Abundance of the beauty God hath made,
It passed away. Tears started in her eyes

And when they dropt, the mountain isle was gone ;
The careless sea had quite forgotten it,
And all was even as it had been before.

190

And Gladys wept, but there was luxury
In her self-pity, while she softly sobbed,
'O, what a little while ! I am afraid
I shall forget that purple mountain isle,
The lovely hollows atween her snow-clad peaks,
The grace of her upheaval where she lay
Well up against the open. O, my heart,
Now I remember how this holiday
Will soon be done, and now my life goes on
Not fed ; and only in the noonday walk
Let to look silently at what it wants,
Without the power to wait or pause awhile,
And understand and draw within itself
The richness of the earth. A holiday !
How few I have ! I spend the silent time
At work, while all THEIR pupils are gone home,
And feel myself remote. They shine apart ;
They are great planets, I a little orb ;
My little orbit far within their own
Turns, and approaches not. But yet, the more
I am alone when those I teach return ;
For they, as planets of some other sun,
Not mine, have paths that can but meet my ring
Once in a cycle. O, how poor I am !
I have not got laid up in this blank heart
Any indulgent kisses given me
Because I had been good, or, yet more sweet,
Because my childhood was itself a good
Attractive thing for kisses, tender praise,
And comforting. An orphan-school at best
Is a cold mother in the winter time
('T was mostly winter when new orphans came),
An unregardful mother in the spring.

200

210

220

' Yet once a year (I did mine wrong) we went
To gather cowslips. How we thought on it
Beforehand, pacing, pacing the dull street,
To that one tree, the only one we saw

From April,—if the cowslips were in bloom
So early ; or if not, from opening May
Even to September. Then there came the feast 230
At Epping. If it rained that day, it rained
For a whole year to us ; we could not think
Of fields and hawthorn hedges, and the leaves
Fluttering, but still it rained, and ever rained.

‘ Ah, well, but I am here ; but I have seen
The gay gorse bushes in their flowering time ;
I know the scent of bean-fields ; I have heard
The satisfying murmur of the main.’

The woman ! She came round the rock again
With her fair baby, and she sat her down 240
By Gladys, murmuring, ‘ Who forbad the grass
To grow by visitations of the dew ?
Who said in ancient time to the desert pool,
“ Thou shalt not wait for angel visitors
To trouble thy still water ” ? Must we bide
At home ? The lore, beloved, shall fly to us
On a pair of sumptuous wings. Or may we breathe
Without ? O, we shall draw to us the air
That times and mystery feed on. This shall lay
Unhidden hands upon the heart o’ the world, 250
And feel it beating. Rivers shall run on,
Full of sweet language as a lover’s mouth,
Delivering of a tune to make her youth
More beautiful than wheat when it is green.

‘ What else ?—(O, none shall envy her !) The rain
And the wild weather will be most her own,
And talk with her o’ nights ; and if the winds
Have seen aught wondrous, they will tell it her
In a mouthful of strange moans—will bring from far,
Her ears being keen, the lowing and the mad 260
Masterful tramping of the bison herds,
Tearing down headlong with their bloodshot eyes,
In savage rifts of hair ; the crack and creak
Of ice-floes in the frozen sea, the cry
Of the white bears, all in a dim blue world
Mumbling their meals by twilight ; or the rock

And majesty of motion, when their heads
Primeval trees toss in a sunny storm,
And hail their nuts down on unweeded fields.
No holidays,' quoth she ; ' drop, drop, O, drop, 270
Thou tired skylark, and go up no more ;
You lime trees, cover not your heads with bees,
Nor give out your good smell. She will not look ;
No, Gladys cannot draw your sweetness in,
For lack of holidays.' So Gladys thought,
' A most strange woman, and she talks of me.'
With that a girl ran up ; ' Mother,' she said,
' Come out of this brown bight, I pray you now,
It smells of fairies.' Gladys thereon thought,
' The mother will not speak to me, perhaps 280
The daughter may,' and asked her courteously,
' What do the fairies smell of ? ' But the girl
With peevish pout replied, ' You know, you know.'
' Not I,' said Gladys ; then she answered her,
' Something like buttercups. But, mother, come,
And whisper up a porpoise from the foam,
Because I want to ride.'

Full slowly, then,
The mother rose, and ever kept her eyes
Upon her little child. ' You freakish maid,'
Said she, ' now mark me, if I call you one, 290
You shall not scold nor make him take you far.'

' I only want—you know I only want,'
The girl replied, ' to go and play awhile
Upon the sand by Lagos.' Then she turned
And muttered low, ' Mother, is this the girl
Who saw the island ? ' But the mother frowned.
' When may she go to it ? ' the daughter asked.
And Gladys, following them, gave all her mind
To hear the answer. ' When she wills to go ;
For yonder comes to shore the ferry boat.' 300
Then Gladys turned to look, and even so
It was ; a ferry boat, and far away
Reared in the offing, lo, the purple peaks
Of her loved island.

Then she raised her arms,
And ran toward the boat, crying out, ' O rare,

The island ! fair befall the island ; let
Me reach the island.' And she sprang on board,
And after her stepped in the freakish maid
And the fair mother, brooding o'er her child;
And this one took the helm, and that let go 310
The sail, and off they flew, and furrowed up
A flaky hill before, and left behind
A sobbing snake-like tail of creamy foam ;
And dancing hither, thither, sometimes shot
Toward the island ; then, when Gladys looked,
Were leaving it to leeward. And the maid
Whistled a wind to come and rock the craft,
And would be leaning down her head to mew
At cat-fish, then lift out into her lap
And dandle baby-seals, which, having kissed, 320
She flung to their sleek mothers, till her own
Rebuked her in good English, after cried,
' Luff, luff, we shall be swamped.' ' I will not luff,'
Sobbed the fair mischief ; ' you are cross to me.'
' For shame ! ' the mother shrieked ; ' luff, luff, my dear ;
Kiss and be friends, and thou shalt have the fish
With the curly tail to ride on.' So she did,
And presently a dolphin bouncing up,
She sprang upon his slippery back—' Farewell,'
She laughed, was off, and all the sea grew calm. 330

Then Gladys was much happier, and was 'ware
In the smooth weather that this woman talked
Like one in sleep, and murmured certain thoughts
Which seemed to be like echoes of her own.
She nodded, ' Yes, the girl is going now
To her own island. Gladys poor ? Not she !
Who thinks so ? Once I met a man in white,
Who said to me, " The thing that might have been
Is called, and questioned why it hath not been ;
And can it give good reason, it is set 340
Beside the actual, and reckoned in
To fill the empty gaps of life." Ah, so
The possible stands by us ever fresh,
Fairer than aught which any life hath owned,
And makes divine amends. Now this was set
Apart from kin, and not ordained a home ;

An equal ;—and not suffered to fence in
 A little plot of earthly good, and say,
 'T is mine ; ' but in bereavement of the part,
 O, yet to taste the whole,—to understand 350
 The grandeur of the story, not to feel
 Sate with good possessed, but evermore
 A healthful hunger for the great idea,
 The beauty and the blessedness of life.

' Lo, now, the shadow ! ' quoth she, breaking off,
 ' We are in the shadow.' Then did Gladys turn,
 And, O, the mountain with the purple peaks
 Was close at hand. It cast a shadow out,
 And they were in it : and she saw the snow,
 And under that the rocks, and under that 360
 The pines, and then the pasturage ; and saw
 Numerous dips, and undulations rare,
 Running down seaward, all astir with lithe
 Long canes, and lofty feathers ; for the palms
 And spice trees of the south, nay, every growth,
 Meets in that island.

So that woman ran
 The boat ashore, and Gladys set her foot
 Thereon. Then all at once much laughter rose ;
 Invisible folk set up exultant shouts,
 ' It all belongs to Gladys ; ' and she ran 370
 And hid herself among the nearest trees
 And panted, shedding tears.

So she looked round,
 And saw that she was in a banyan grove,
 Full of wild peacocks,—pecking on the grass,
 A flickering mass of eyes, blue, green, and gold,
 Or reaching out their jewelled necks, where high
 They sat in rows along the boughs. No tree
 Cumbered with creepers let the sunshine through,
 But it was caught in scarlet cups, and poured
 From these on amber tufts of bloom, and dropped
 Lower on azure stars. The air was still, 381
 As if awaiting somewhat, or asleep,
 And Gladys was the only thing that moved,
 Excepting—no, they were not birds—what then ?

Glorified rainbows with a living soul ?

While they passed through a sunbeam they were
seen,

Not elsewhere, but they were present yet

In shade. They were at work, pomegranate fruit

That lay about removing—purple grapes,

That clustered in the path, clearing aside. 390

Through a small spot of light would pass and go,

The glorious happy mouth and two fair eyes

Of somewhat that made rustlings where it went ;

But when a beam would strike the ground sheer
down,

Behold them ! they had wings, and they would pass

One after other with the sheeny fans,

Bearing them slowly, that their hues were seen,

Tender as russet crimson dropt on snows,

Or where they turned flashing with gold and dashed

With purple glooms. And they had feet, but these 400

Did barely touch the ground. And they took heed

Not to disturb the waiting quietness ;

Nor rouse up fawns, that slept beside their dams ;

Nor the fair leopard, with her sleek paws laid

Across her little drowsy cubs ; nor swans,

That, floating, slept upon a glassy pool ;

Nor rosy cranes, all slumbering in the reeds,

With heads beneath their wings. For this, you know

Was Eden. She was passing through the trees

That made a ring about it, and she caught 410

A glimpse of glades beyond. All she had seen

Was nothing to them ; but words are not made

To tell that tale. No wind was let to blow,

And all the doves were bidden to hold their peace.

Why ? One was working in a valley near,

And none might look that way. It was understood

That He had nearly ended that His work ;

For two shapes met, and one to other spake,

Accosting him with, ‘ Prince, what worketh He ? ’

Who whispered, ‘ Lo ! He fashioneth red clay.’ 420

And all at once a little trembling stir

Was felt in the earth, and every creature woke,

And laid its head down, listening. It was known

Then that the work was done ; the new-made king

Had risen, and set his feet upon his realm,
And it acknowledged him.

But in her path
Came some one that withstood her, and he said,
'What doest thou here?' Then she did turn and flee,
Among those coloured spirits, through the grove,
Trembling for haste; it was not well with her 430
Till she came forth of those thick banyan trees,
And set her feet upon the common grass,
And felt the common wind.

Yet once beyond,
She could not choose but cast a backward glance.
The lovely matted growth stood like a wall,
And means of entering were not evident—
The gap had closed. But Gladys laughed for joy,
She said, 'Remoteness and a multitude
Of years are counted nothing here. Behold,
To-day I have been in Eden. O, it blooms 440
In my own island.'

And she wandered on,
Thinking, until she reached a place of palms,
And all the earth was sandy where she walked—
Sandy and dry—strewn with papyrus leaves,
Old idols, rings and pottery, painted lids
Of mummies (for perhaps it was the way
That leads to dead old Egypt), and withal
Excellent sunshine cut out sharp and clear
The hot prone pillars, and the carved plinths—
Stone lotus cups, with petals dipped in sand, 450
And wicked gods, and sphinxes bland, who sat
And smiled upon the ruin. O how still!
Hot, blank, illuminated with the clear
Stare of an unveiled sky. Thy dry stiff leaves
Of palm trees never rustled, and the soul
Of that dead ancestry was itself dead.
She was above her ankles in the sand,
When she beheld a rocky road, and, lo!
It bare in it the ruts of chariot wheels,
Which erst had carried to their pagan prayers 460
The brown old Pharaohs; for the ruts led on
To a great cliff, that either was a cliff
Or some dread shrine in ruins—partly reared

In front of that same cliff, and partly hewn
Or excavate within its heart. Great heaps
Of sand and stones on either side there lay ;
And, as the girl drew on, rose out from each,
As from a ghostly kennel, gods unblest,
Dog-headed, and behind them wingèd things
Like angels ; and this carven multitude 470
Hedged in, to right and left, the rocky road.

At last, the cliff—and in the cliff a door
Yawning : and she looked in, as down the throat
Of some stupendous giant, and beheld
No floor, but wide, worn, flights of steps, that led
Into a dimness. When the eyes could bear
That change to gloom, she saw flight after flight,
Flight after flight, the worn long stair go down,
Smooth with the feet of nations dead and gone.
So she did enter ; also she went down 480
Till it was dark, and yet again went down,
Till, gazing upward at that yawning door,
It seemed no larger, in its height remote,
Than a pin's head. But while, irresolute,
She doubted of the end, yet farther down
A slender ray of lamplight fell away
Along the stair, as from a door ajar :
To this again she felt her way, and stepped
Adown the hollow stair, and reached the light ;
But fear fell on her, fear ; and she forbore 490
Entrance, and listened. Aye ! 't was even so—
A sigh ; the breathing as of one who slept
And was disturbed. So she drew back awhile,
And trembled ; then her doubting hand she laid
Against the door, and pushed it ; but the light
Waned, faded, sank ; and as she came within—
Hark, hark ! A spirit was it, and asleep ?
A spirit doth not breathe like clay. There hung
A cresset from the roof, and thence appeared
A flickering speck of light, and disappeared ; 500
Then dropped along the floor its elfish flakes,
That fell on some one resting, in the gloom—
Somewhat, a spectral shadow, then a shape
That loomed. It was a heifer, aye, and white,
Breathing and languid through prolonged repose.

Was it a heifer ? all the marble floor
 Was milk-white also, and the cresset paled,
 And straight their whiteness grew confused and mixed.

But when the cresset, taking heart, bloomed out—
 The whiteness—and asleep again ! but now 510
 It was a woman, robed, and with a face
 Lovely and dim. And Gladys while she gazed
 Murmured, ' O terrible ! I am afraid
 To breathe among these intermittent lives,
 That fluctuate in mystic solitude,
 And change and fade. Lo ! where the goddess sits
 Dreaming on her dim throne ; a crescent moon
 She wears upon her forehead. Ah ! her frown
 Is mournful, and her slumber is not sweet.
 What dost thou hold, Isis, to thy cold breast ? 520
 A baby god with finger on his lips,
 Asleep, and dreaming of departed sway ?
 Thy son. Hush, hush ; he knoweth all the lore
 And sorcery of old Egypt ; but his mouth
 He shuts ; the secret shall be lost with him,
 He will not tell.'

The woman coming down !
 ' Child, what art doing here ? ' the woman said ;
 ' What wilt thou of Dame Isis and her bairn ?
 (*Aye, aye, we see thee breathing in thy shroud—
 Thy pretty shroud, all frilled and furbelowed.*) 530
 The air is dim with dust of spiced bones.
 I mark a crypt down there. Tier upon tier
 Of painted coffers fills it. What if we,
 Passing, should slip, and crash into their midst—
 Break the frail ancientry, and smothered lie,
 Tumbled among the ribs of queens and kings,
 And all the gear they took to bed with them !
 Horrible ! let us hence.'

And Gladys said,
 ' O, they are rough to mount, those stairs ; ' but she
 Took her and laughed, and up the mighty flight 540
 Shot like a meteor with her. ' There,' said she ;
 ' The light is sweet when one has smelled of graves,
 Down in unholy heathen gloom ; farewell.'
 She pointed to a gateway, strong and high,

Reared of hewn stones ; but, look ! in lieu of gate,
There was a glittering cobweb drawn across,
And on the lintel there were writ these words :

‘ Ho, every one that cometh, I divide
What hath been from what might be, and the line
Hangeth before thee as a spider’s web ; 550
Yet, wouldst thou enter thou must break the line,
Or else forbear the hill.’

The maiden said,
‘ So, cobweb, I will break thee.’ And she passed
Among some oak trees on the farther side,
And waded through the bracken round their bolls,
Until she saw the open, and drew on
Toward the edge o’ the wood, where it was mixed
With pines and heathery places wild and fresh.
Here she put up a creature, that ran on
Before her, crying, ‘ Tint, tint, tint,’ and turned, 560
Sat up, and stared at her with elfish eyes,
Jabbering of gramarye, one Michael Scott,
The wizard that wonned somewhere underground,
With other talk enough to make one fear
To walk in lonely places. After passed
A man-at-arms, William of Deloraine ;
He shook his head, ‘ An’ if I list to tell,’
Quoth he, ‘ I know, but how it matters not ; ’
Then crossed himself, and muttered of a clap
Of thunder, and a shape in amice grey, 570
But still it mouthed at him, and whimpered, ‘ Tint,
Tint, tint.’ ‘ There shall be wild work some day soon
Quoth he, ‘ thou limb of darkness : he will come,
Thy master, push a hand up, catch thee, imp,
And so good Christians shall have peace, perdie.’

Then Gladys was so frightened, that she ran,
And got away, towards a grassy down,
Where sheep and lambs were feeding, with a boy
To tend them. ‘ T was the boy who wears that herb
Called heartsease in his bosom, and he sang 580
So sweetly to his flock, that she stole on
Nearer to listen. ‘ O, Content, Content,
Give me,’ sang he, ‘ thy tender company.
I feed my flock among the myrtles ; all

My lambs are twins, and they have laid them down
 Along the slopes of Beulah. Come, fair love,
 From the other side the river, where their harps
 Thou hast been helping them to tune. O come,
 And pitch thy tent by mine ; let me behold
 Thy mouth—that even in slumber talks of peace— 590
 Thy well-set locks, and dove-like countenance.'

And Gladys hearkened, couched upon the grass,
 Till she had rested ; then did ask the boy,
 For it was afternoon, and she was fain
 To reach the shore, ' Which is the path, I pray,
 That leads one to the water ? ' But he said,
 ' Dear lass, I only know the narrow way,
 The path that leads one to the golden gate
 Across the river.' So she wandered on ;
 And presently her feet grew cool, the grass 600
 Standing so high, and thyme being thick and soft.
 The air was full of voices, and the scent
 Of mountain blossom loaded all its wafts ;
 For she was on the slopes of a goodly mount,
 And reared in such a sort that it looked down
 Into the deepest valleys, darkest glades,
 And richest plains o' the island. It was set
 Midway between the snows majestic
 And a wide level, such as men would choose
 For growing wheat ; and some one said to her 610
 ' It is the hill Parnassus.' So she walked
 Yet on its lower slope, and she could hear
 The calling of an unseen multitude
 To some upon the mountain, ' Give us more ; '
 And others said, ' We are tired of this old world :
 Make it look new again.' Then there were some
 Who answered lovingly—(the dead yet speak
 From that high mountain, as the living do) ;
 But others sang desponding, ' We have kept
 The vision for a chosen few : we love 620
 Fit audience better than a rough huzza
 From the unreasoning crowd.'

Then words came up :

' There was a time, you poets, was a time
 When all the poetry was ours, and made

By some who climbed the mountain from our midst.
We loved it then, we sang it in our streets.

O, it grows obsolete ! Be you as they :
Our heroes die and drop away from us ;
Oblivion folds them 'neath her dusky wing,
Fair copies wasted to the hungering world. 630
Save them. We fall so low for lack of them,
That many of us think scorn of honest trade,
And take no pride in our own shops ; who care
Only to quit a calling, will not make
The calling what it might be : who despise
Their work, fate laughs at, and doth let the work
Dull, and degrade them.'

Then did Gladys smile :

'Heroes !' quoth she ; 'yet, now I think on it,
There was the jolly goldsmith, brave Sir Hugh,
Certes, a hero ready made. Methinks 640
I see him burnishing of golden gear,
Tankard and charger, and a-muttering low,
"London is thirsty"—(then he weighs a chain) :
"T is an ill thing, my masters. I would give
The worth of this, and many such as this,
To bring it water."

'Aye, and after him

There came up Guy of London, lettered son
O' the honest lighterman. I'll think on him,
Leaning upon the bridge on summer eves,
After his shop was closed : a still, grave man, 650
With melancholy eyes. "While these are hale,"
He saith, when he looks down and marks the crowd
Cheerily working ; where the river-marge
Is blocked with ships and boats ; and all the wharves
Swarm, and the cranes swing in with merchandise—
"While these are hale, 't is well, 't is very well.
But, O good Lord," saith he, "when these are sick—
I fear me, Lord, this excellent workmanship
Of Thine is counted for a cumbrance then.
Aye, aye, my hearties ! many a man of you, 660
Struck down, or maimed, or fevered, shrinks away,
And, mastered in that fight for lack of aid,
Creeps shivering to a corner, and there dies."
Well, we have heard the rest.

Ah, next I think,

Upon the merchant captain, stout of heart
To dare and to endure. "Robert," saith he,
(The navigator Knox to his manful son,)
"I sit a captive from the ship detained ;
This heathenry doth let thee visit her.
Remember, son, if thou, alas ! shouldst fail 670
To ransom thy poor father, they are free
As yet, the mariners ; have wives at home,
As I have ; aye, and liberty is sweet
To all men. For the ship, she is not ours,
Therefore, 'beseech thee, son, lay on the mate
This my command, to leave me, and set sail.
As for thyself—" "Good father," saith the son ;
"I will not, father, ask your blessing now,
Because, for fair, or else for evil, fate
We two shall meet again." And so they did. 680
The dusky men, peeling off cinnamon,
And beating nutmeg clusters from the tree,
Ransom and bribe contemned. The good ship sailed,—
The son returned to share his father's cell.

'O, there are many such. Would I had wit
Their worth to sing !' With that, she turned her feet.
'I am tired now,' said Gladys, 'of their talk
Around this hill Parnassus.' And, behold,
A piteous sight—an old, blind, greybeard king
Led by a fool with bells. Now this was loved 690
Of the crowd below the hill ; and when he called
For his lost kingdom, and bewailed his age,
And plained on his unkind daughters, they were known
To say, that if the best of gold and gear
Could have bought him back his kingdom, and made kind
The hard hearts which had broken his erewhile,
They would have gladly paid it from their store
Many times over. What is done is done,
No help. The ruined majesty passed on.
And look you ! one who met her as she walked 700
Showed her a mountain nymph lovely as light.
Her name CEnone ; and she mourned and mourned,
'O Mother Ida,' and she could not cease
No, nor be comforted.

And after this,

Soon there came by, arrayed in Norman cap
And kirtle, an Arcadian villager,
Who said, 'I pray you, have you chanced to meet
One Gabriel?' and she sighed; but Gladys took
And kissed her hand: she could not answer her,
Because she guessed the end.

With that it drew 710

To evening; and as Gladys wandered on
In the calm weather, she beheld the wave,
And she ran down to set her feet again
On the sea margin, which was covered thick
With white shell-skeletons. The sky was red
As wine. The water played among bare ribs
Of many wrecks, that lay half-buried there
In the sand. She saw a cave, and moved thereto
To ask her way, and one so innocent
Came out to meet her, that with marvelling mute 720
She gazed and gazed into her sea-blue eyes,
For in them beamed the untaught ecstasy
Of childhood, that lives on though youth be come,
And love just born.

She could not choose but name her shipwrecked prince,
All blushing. She told Gladys many things
That are not in the story—things, in sooth,
That Prospero her father knew. But now
'T was evening, and the sun dropped; purple stripes
In the sea were copied from some clouds that lay 730
Out in the west. And lo! the boat, and more,
The freakish thing to take fair Gladys home.
She mowed at her, but Gladys took the helm:
'Peace, peace!' she said; 'be good: you shall not steer,
For I am your liege lady.' Then she sang
The sweetest songs she knew all the way home.

So Gladys set her feet upon the sand;
While in the sunset glory died away
The peaks of that blest island.

'Fare you well,
My country, my own kingdom,' then she said, 740
'Till I go visit you again, farewell.'

She looked toward their house with whom she dwelt,—
 The carriages were coming. Hastening up,
 She was in time to meet them at the door,
 And lead the sleepy little ones within ;
 And some were cross and shivered, and her dames
 Were weary and right hard to please ; but she
 Felt like a beggar suddenly endowed
 With a warm cloak to 'fend her from the cold.
 ' For, come what will,' she said, ' I had *to-day*. 750
 There is an island.'

The Moral

What is the moral ? Let us think awhile,
 Taking the editorial WE to help,
 It sounds respectable.

The moral ; yes,
 We always read, when any fable ends,
 ' Hence we may learn.' A moral must be found.
 What do you think of this : ' Hence we may learn
 That dolphins swim about the coast of Wales,
 And Admiralty maps should now be drawn
 By teacher-girls, because their sight is keen, 760
 And they can spy out islands.' Will that do ?
 No, that is far too plain—too evident.

Perhaps a general moralising vein—
 (We know we have a happy knack that way.
 We have observed, moreover, that young men
 Are fond of good advice, and so are girls ;
 Especially of that meandering kind,
 Which winding on so sweetly, treats of all
 They ought to be and do and think and wear,
 As one may say, from creeds to comforters. 770
 Indeed, we much prefer that sort ourselves,
 So soothing). Good, a moralising vein :
 That is the thing ; but how to manage it ?
 ' Hence we may learn,' if we be so inclined,
 That life goes best with those who take it best ;
 That wit can spin from work a golden robe
 To queen it in ; that who can paint at will
 A private picture gallery, should not cry

For shillings that will let him in to look
 At some by others painted. Furthermore, 780
 Hence we may learn, you poets—(and we count
For poets all who ever felt that such
They were, and all who secretly have known
That such they could be ; aye, moreover, all
Who wind the robes of ideality
About the bareness of their lives, and hang
Comforting curtains, knit of fancy's yarn,
Nightly betwixt them and the frosty world)—
 Hence we may learn, you poets, that of all
 We should be most content. The earth is given 790
 To us : we reign by virtue of a sense
 Which lets us hear the rhythm of that old verse,
 The ring of that old tune whereto she spins.
 Humanity is given to us : we reign
 By virtue of a sense, which lets us in
 To know its troubles ere they have been told,
 And take them home and lull them into rest
 With mournfullest music. Time is given to us—
 Time past, time future. Who, good sooth, beside
 Have seen it well, have walked this empty world 800
 When she went steaming, and from pulpy hills
 Have marked the spurting of their flamy crowns ?

Have not we seen the tabernacle pitched,
 And peered between the linen curtains, blue,
 Purple, and scarlet, at the dimness there,
 And, frightened, have not dared to look again ?
 But, quaint antiquity ! beheld, we thought,
 A chest that might have held the manna pot
 And Aaron's rod that budded. Aye, we leaned 810
 Over the edge of Britain, while the fleet
 Of Caesar loomed and neared ; then, afterwards,
 We saw fair Venice looking at herself
 In the glass below her, while her Doge went forth
 In all his bravery to the wedding.

This,
 However, counts for nothing to the grace
 We wot of in time future :—therefore add,
 And afterwards have done : ‘ *Hence we may learn,*
 That though it be a grand and comely thing

To be unhappy—(and we think it is,
 Because so many grand and clever folk
 Have found out reasons for unhappiness,
 And talked about uncomfortable things—
 Low motives, bores, and shams, and hollowness,
 The hollowness o' the world, till we at last
 Have scarcely dared to jump or stamp, for fear
 Being so hollow, it should break some day,
 And let us in)—yet, since we are not grand,
 O, not at all, and as for cleverness,
 That may be or may not be—it is well
 For us to be as happy as we can !

820

830

Agreed ; and with a word to the nobler sex,
 As thus ; we pray you carry not your guns
 On the half-cock ; we pray you set your pride
 In its proper place, and never be ashamed
 Of any honest calling—let us add,
 And end ; for all the rest, hold up your heads
 And mind your English.

SONGS WITH PRELUDES

WEDLOCK

THE sun was streaming in : I woke, and said,
 ' Where is my wife—that has been made my wife
 Only this year ? ' The casement stood ajar :
 I did but lift my head : The pear-tree dropped,
 The great white pear-tree dropped with dew from leaves
 And blossom, under heavens of happy blue.

My wife had wakened first, and had gone down
 Into the orchard. All the air was calm ;
 Audible humming filled it. At the roots
 Of peony bushes lay in rose-red heaps,
 Or snowy ; fallen bloom. The crag-like hills
 Were tossing down their silver messengers,
 And two brown foreigners, called cuckoo-birds,
 Gave them good answer : all things else were mute ;
 An idle world lay listening to their talk,
 They had it to themselves.

10

III

Before the road and river meet,
And stepping-stones are wet and glisten,
I heard a sound of laughter sweet,
And paused to like it, and to listen.

IV

I heard the chanting waters flow,
The cushat's note, the bee's low humming,—
Then turned the hedge, and did not know—
How could I ?—that my time was coming.

V

A girl upon the nighest stone,
Half doubtful of the deed, was standing,
So far the shallow flood had flown
Beyond the 'customed leap of landing.

VI

She knew not any need of me,
Yet me she waited all unweeting ;
We thought not I had crossed the sea,
And half the sphere to give her meeting.

VII

I waded out, her eyes I met,
I wished the moments had been hours ;
I took her in my arms, and set
Her dainty feet among the flowers.

VIII

Her fellow maids in copse and lane,
Ah ! still, methinks, I hear them calling :
The wind's soft whisper in the plain,
The cushat's coo, the water's falling.

IX

But now it is a year ago,
But now possession crowns endeavour ;
I took her in my heart, to grow
And fill the hollow place for ever.

REGRET

O THAT word REGRET !

There have been nights and morns when we have sighed,
 ' Let us alone, Regret ! We are content
 To throw thee all our past, so thou wilt sleep
 For ay.' But it is patient, and it wakes ;
 It hath not learned to cry itself to sleep.
 But plaineth on the bed that it is hard.

We did amiss when we did wish it gone
 And over : sorrows humanise our race ;
 Tears are the showers that fertilise this world ; 10
 And memory of things precious keepeth warm
 The heart that once did hold them.

They are poor

That have lost nothing ; they are poorer far
 Who, losing, have forgotten ; they most poor
 Of all, who lose and wish they MIGHT forget.
 For life is one, and in its warp and woof
 There runs a thread of gold that glitters fair,
 And sometimes in the pattern shows most sweet
 Where there are sombre colours. It is true
 That we have wept. But oh ! this thread of gold, 20
 We would not have it tarnish ; let us turn
 Oft and look back upon the wondrous web,
 And when it shineth sometimes we shall know
 That memory is possession.

I

When I remember something which I had,
 But which is gone, and I must do without,
 I sometimes wonder how I can be glad,
 Even in cowslip time when hedges sprout ;
 It makes me sigh to think on it,—but yet
 My days will not be better days, should I forget.

II

When I remember something promised me,
 But which I never had, nor can have now,
 Because the promiser we no more see
 In countries that accord with mortal vow ;
 When I remember this, I mourn,—but yet
 My happier days are not the days when I forget.

LAMENTATION

I READ upon that book,
 Which down the golden gulf doth let us look
 On the sweet days of pastoral majesty ;
 I read upon that book
 How, when the Shepherd Prince did flee
 (Red Esau's twin), he desolate took
 The stone for a pillow : then he fell on sleep.
 And lo ! there was a ladder. Lo ! there hung
 A ladder from the star-place, and it clung
 To the earth : it tied her so to heaven ; and oh ! 10
 There flutter'd wings ;
 Then were ascending and descending things
 That stepped to him where he lay low ;
 Then up the ladder would a-drifting go
 (This feathered brood of heaven), and show
 Small as white flakes in winter that are blown
 Together, underneath the great white throne.

When I had shut the book, I said,
 ' Now, as for me, my dreams upon my bed
 Are not like Jacob's dream ; 20
 Yet I have got it in my life ; yes, I,
 And many more : it doth not us beseem,
 Therefore, to sigh.
 Is there not hung a ladder in our sky ?
 Yea ; and, moreover, all the way up on high
 Is thickly peopled with the prayers of men.
 We have no dream ! What then ?
 Like wingèd wayfarers the height they scale,
 (By Him that offers them they shall prevail)—

The prayers of men.
But where is found a prayer for me ;
How should I pray ?
My heart is sick, and full of strife.
I heard one whisper with departing breath,
“ Suffer us not, for any pains of death,
To fall from Thee.”
But O, the pains of life ! the pains of life !
There is no comfort now, and nought to win,
But yet—I will begin.’

I

‘ Preserve to me my wealth,’ I do not say,
For that is wasted away ;
And much of it was cankered ere it went.
‘ Preserve to me my health,’ I cannot say,
For that, upon a day,
Went after other delights to banishment.

II

What can I pray ? ‘ Give me forgetfulness ? ’
No, I would still possess
Past away smiles, though present fronts be stern.
‘ Give me again my kindred ? ’ Nay ; not so,
Not idle prayers. We know
They that have crossed the river cannot return.

III

I do not pray, ‘ Comfort me ! comfort me ! ’
For how should comfort be ?
O,—O that cooing mouth—that little white head !
No ; but I pray, ‘ If it be not too late,
Open to me the gate,
That I may find my babe when I am dead.

IV

‘ Show me the path. I had forgotten Thee
When I was happy and free,
Walking down here in the gladsome light o’ the sun ;
But now I come and mourn ; O set my feet
In the road to Thy blest seat,
And for the rest, O God, Thy will be done.’

DOMINION

WHEN found the rose delight in her fair hue ?
 Colour is nothing to this world ; 't is I
 That see it. Farther, I discover soul,
 That trees are nothing to their fellow trees ;
 It is but I that love their stateliness,
 And I that, comforting my heart, do sit
 At noon beneath their shadow. I will step
 On the ledges of this world, for it is mine ;
 But the other world ye wot of, shall go too ;
 I will carry it in my bosom. O my world,
 That was not built with clay !

10

Consider it
 (This outer world we tread on) as a harp—
 A gracious instrument on whose fair strings
 We learn those airs we shall be set to play
 When mortal hours are ended. Let the wings,
 Man, of thy spirit move on it as wind,
 And draw forth melody. Why shouldst thou yet
 Lie grovelling ? More is won than e'er was lost :
 Inherit. Let thy day be to thy night
 A teller of good tidings. Let thy praise
 Go up as birds go up that, when they wake,
 Shake off the dew and soar.

20

So take joy home,
 And make a place in thy great heart for her,
 And give her time to grow, and cherish her ;
 Then will she come, and oft will sing to thee,
 When thou art working in the furrows ; aye,
 Or weeding in the sacred hour of dawn.
 It is a comely fashion to be glad—
 Joy is the grace we say to God.

Art tired ?
 There is a rest remaining. Hast thou sinned ?
 There is a Sacrifice. Lift up thy head,
 The lovely world, and the over-world alike,
 Ring with a song eterne, a happy rede,
 ' THY FATHER LOVES THEE.'

30

I

Yon moorèd mackerel fleet
Hangs thick as a swarm of bees,
Or a clustering village street
Foundationless built on the seas.

II

The mariners ply their craft,
Each set in his castle frail ;
His care is all for the draught,
And he dries the rain-beaten sail.

III

For rain came down in the night,
And thunder muttered full oft,
But now the azure is bright,
And hawks are wheeling aloft.

IV

I take the land to my breast,
In her coat with daisies fine ;
For me are the hills in their best,
And all that 's made is mine.

V

Sing high ! Though the red sun dip,
There yet is a day for me ;
Nor youth I count for a ship
That long ago foundered at sea.

VI

' Did the lost love die and depart ?
Many times since we have met ;
For I hold the years in my heart,
And all that was—is yet.

VII

' I grant to the king his reign ;
Let us yield him homage due ;
But over the lands there are twain,
O king, I must rule as you.

VIII

‘ I grant to the wise his meed,
 But his yoke I will not brook,
 For God taught ME to read—
 He lent me the world for a book.’

FRIENDSHIP

ON A SUN-PORTRAIT OF HER HUSBAND, SENT BY HIS
 WIFE TO THEIR FRIEND.

BEAUTIFUL eyes—and shall I see no more
 The living thought when it would leap from them,
 And play in all its sweetness 'neath their lids ?

Here was a man familiar with fair heights
 That poets climb. Upon his peace the tears
 And troubles of our race deep inroads made,
 Yet life was sweet to him ; he kept his heart
 At home. Who saw his wife might well have thought—
 ‘ God loves this man. He chose a wife for him—
 The true one ! ’ O sweet eyes, that seem to live, 10
 I know so much of you, tell me the rest !
 Eyes full of fatherhood and tender care
 For small, young children. Is a message here
 That you would fain have sent, but had not time ?
 If such there be, I promise, by long love
 And perfect friendship, by all trust that comes
 Of understanding, that I will not fail,
 No, nor delay to find it.

O, my heart
 Will often pain me as for some strange fault—
 Some grave defect in nature—when I think 20
 How I, delighted, 'neath those olive trees,
 Moved to the music of the tideless main,
 While, with sore weeping, in an island home
 They laid that much-loved head beneath the sod,
 And I did not know.

I

I stand on the bridge where last we stood
When delicate leaves were young,
The children called us from yonder wood,
While a mated blackbird sung.

II

Ah, yet you call—in your gladness call—
And I hear your pattering feet ;
It does not matter, matter at all,
You fatherless children sweet—

III

It does not matter at all to you,
Young hearts that pleasure besets ;
The father sleeps, but the world is new,
The child of his love forgets.

IV

I too, it may be, before they drop,
The leaves that flicker to-day,
Ere bountiful gleams make ripe the crop,
Shall pass from my place away :

V

Ere yon grey cygnet puts on her white,
Or snow lies soft on the wold,
Shall shut these eyes on the lovely light,
And leave the story untold.

VI

Shall I tell it there ? Ah, let that be,
For the warm pulse beats so high ;
To love to-day, and to breathe and see—
To-morrow perhaps to die—

VII

Leave it with God. But this I have known,
That sorrow is over soon ;
Some in dark nights, sore weeping alone,
Forget by full of the moon.

VIII

But if all loved, as the few can love,
 This world would seldom be well ;
 And who need wish, if he dwells above,
 For a deep, a long death knell.

IX

There are four or five, who passing this place,
 While they live will name me yet ;
 And when I am gone will think on my face,
 And feel a kind of regret.

WINSTANLEY

The Apology

Quoth the cedar to the reeds and rushes,
' Water-grass, you know not what I do ;
Know not of my storms, nor of my hushes,
And—I know not you.'

Quoth the reeds and rushes, ' Wind ! O waken !
Breathe, O wind, and set our answer free,
For we have no voice, of you forsaken,
For the cedar tree.'

Quoth the earth at midnight to the ocean,
' Wilderness of water, lost to view,
Nought you are to me but sounds of motion ;
I am nought to you.'

Quoth the ocean, ' Dawn ! O fairest, clearest,
Touch me with thy golden fingers bland ;
For I have no smile till thou appearest
For the lovely land.'

Quoth the hero dying, whelmed in glory,
' Many blame me, few have understood ;
Ah, my folk, to you I leave a story—
Make its meaning good.'

*Quoth the folk, ' Sing, poet ! teach us, prove us ;
Surely we shall learn the meaning then ;
Wound us with a pain divine, O move us,
For this man of men.'*

WINSTANLEY'S deed, you kindly folk,
With it I fill my lay,
And a nobler man ne'er walk'd the world,
Let his name be what it may.

The good ship *Snowdrop* tarried long,
Up at the vane look'd he ;
' Belike,' he said, for the wind had dropp'd,
' She lieth becalm'd at sea.'

The lovely ladies flock'd within,
And still would each one say,
' Good mercer, be the ships come up ? '
But still he answered ' Nay '.

Then stepp'd two mariners down the street,
With looks of grief and fear :
' Now, if Winstanley be your name,
We bring you evil cheer !

' For the good ship *Snowdrop* struck—she struck
On the rock—the Eddystone,
And down she went with threescore men
We two being left alone.

' Down in the deep, with freight and crew
Past any help she lies,
And never a bale has come to shore
Of all thy merchandise.'

' For cloth o' gold and comely frieze,'
Winstanley said, and sigh'd,
' For velvet coif, or costly coat,
They fathoms deep may bide.

' O thou brave skipper, blithe and kind,
O mariners bold and true,
Sorry at heart, right sorry am I,
A-thinking of yours and you.

‘ Many long days Winstanley’s breast
Shall feel a weight within,
For a waft of wind he shall be ’fear’d
And trading count but sin.

‘ To him no more it shall be joy
To pace the cheerful town,
And see the lovely ladies gay
Step on in velvet gown.’

The *Snowdrop* sank at Lammas tide,
All under the yeasty spray ;
On Christmas Eve the brig *Content*
Was also cast away.

He little thought o’ New Year’s night,
So jolly as he sat then,
While drank the toast and praised the roast
The round-faced Aldermen,—

While serving lads ran to and fro,
Pouring the ruby wine,
And jellies trembled on the board,
And towering pasties fine,—

While loud huzzas ran up the roof
Till the lamps did rock o’erhead,
And holly boughs from rafters hung
Dropp’d down their berries red,—

He little thought on Plymouth Hoe,
With every rising tide,
How the wave wash’d in his sailor lads,
And laid them side by side.

There stepp’d a stranger to the board :
‘ Now, stranger, who be ye ? ’
He look’d to right, he look’d to left,
And ‘ Rest you merry,’ quoth he ;

‘ For you did not see the brig go down,
Or ever a storm had blown ;
For you did not see the white wave rear
At the rock—the Eddystone.

‘ She drave at the rock with sternsails set ;
Crash went the masts in twain ;
She stagger’d back with her mortal blow,
Then leap’d at it again.

‘ There rose a great cry, bitter and strong,
The misty moon look’d out !
And the water swarmed with seamen’s heads,
And the wreck was strew’d about.

‘ I saw her mainsail lash the sea
As I clung to the rock alone ;
Then she heeled over, and down she went,
And sank like any stone.

‘ She was a fair ship, but all ’s one !
For nought could bide the shock.’
‘ I will take horse,’ Winstanley said,
‘ And see this deadly rock.’

‘ For never again shall barque o’ mine
Sail over the windy sea,
Unless, by the blessing of God, for this
Be found a remedy.’

Winstanley rode to Plymouth town
All in the sleet and the snow,
And he looked around on shore and sound
As he stood on Plymouth Hoe.

Till a pillar of spray rose far away,
And shot up its stately head,
Rear’d and fell over, and rear’d again :
‘ ’Tis the rock ! the rock ! ’ he said.

Straight to the Mayor he took his way,
‘ Good Master Mayor,’ quoth he,
‘ I am a mercer of London town,
And owner of vessels three,—

‘ But for your rock of dark renown,
I had five to track the main.’
‘ You are one of many,’ the old Mayor said,
‘ That on the rock complain.

' An ill rock, mercer ! your words ring right,
Well with my thoughts they chime,
For my two sons to the world to come
It sent before their time.'

' Lend me a lighter, good Master Mayor,
And a score of shipwrights free,
For I think to raise a lantern tower
On this rock o' destiny.'

The old Mayor laugh'd, but sigh'd also ;
' Ah, youth,' quoth he, ' is rash ;
Sooner, young man, thou 'lt root it out
From the sea that doth it lash.

' Who sails too near its jagged teeth,
He shall have evil lot ;
For the calmest seas that tumble there
Froth like a boiling pot.

' And the heavier seas few look on nigh,
But straight they lay him dead ;
A seventy-gun ship, sir !—they'll shoot
Higher than her mast-head.

' O, beacons sighted in the dark,
They are right welcome things,
And pitchpots flaming on the shore
Show fair as angel wings.

' Hast gold in hand ? then light the land,
It 'longs to thee and me ;
But let alone the deadly rock
In God Almighty's sea.'

Yet said he, ' Nay—I must away,
On the rock to set my feet ;
My debts are paid, my will I made,
Or ever I did thee greet.

' If I must die, then let me die
By the rock and not elsewhere ;
If I may live, O let me live
To mount my lighthouse stair.'

The old Mayor look'd him in the face,
And answer'd : ' Have thy way ;
Thy heart is stout, as if round about
It was braced with an iron stay :

' Have thy will, mercer ! choose thy men,
Put off from the storm-rid shore ;
God with thee be, or I shall see
Thy face and theirs no more.'

Heavily plunged the breaking wave,
And foam flew up the lea,
Morning and even the drifted snow
Fell into the dark grey sea.

Winstanley chose him men and gear ;
He said, ' My time I waste,'
For the seas ran seething up the shore,
And the wrack drave on in haste.

But twenty days he waited and more
Pacing the strand alone,
Or ever he set his manly foot
On the rock—the Eddystone.

Then he and the sea began their strife,
And work'd with power and might :
Whatever the man rear'd up by day
The sea broke down by night.

He wrought at ebb with bar and beam,
He sail'd to shore at flow ;
And at his side, by that same tide,
Came bar and beam alsò.

' Give in, give in,' the old Mayor cried,
' Or thou wilt rue the day.'
' Yonder he goes,' the townsfolk sigh'd,
' But the rock will have its way.

For all his looks that are so stout,
And his speeches brave and fair,
He may wait on the wind, wait on the wave,
But he'll build no lighthouse there.'

In fine weather and foul weather
The rock his arts did flout,
Through the long days and the short days,
Till all that year ran out.

With fine weather and foul weather
Another year came in :
' To take his wage,' the workmen said,
' We almost count a sin.'

Now March was gone, came April in,
And a sea-fog settled down,
And forth sail'd he on a glassy sea,
He sail'd from Plymouth town.

With men and stores he put to sea,
As he was wont to do ;
They show'd in the fog like ghosts full faint—
A ghostly craft and crew.

And the sea-fog lay and wax'd alway,
For a long eight days and more ;
' God help our men,' quoth the women then ;
' For they bide long from shore.'

They paced the Hoe in doubt and dread :
' Where may our mariners be ?'
But the brooding fog lay soft as down
Over the quiet sea.

A Scottish schooner made the port,
The thirteenth day at e'en :
' As I am a man,' the captain cried,
' A strange sight I have seen :

' And a strange sound heard, my masters all,
At sea, in the fog and the rain,
Like shipwrights' hammers tapping low,
Then loud, then low again.

' And a stately house one instant show'd,
Through a rift, on the vessel's lee :
What manner of creatures may be those
That build upon the sea ?'

Then sigh'd the folk, 'The Lord be praised !'
And they flock'd to the shore amain ;
All over the Hoe that livelong night,
Many stood out in the rain.

It ceased, and the red sun rear'd his head,
And the rolling fog did flee ;
And, lo ! in the offing faint and far
Winstanley's house at sea !

In fair weather with mirth and cheer
The stately tower uprose ;
In foul weather, with hunger and cold,
They were content to close ;

Till up the stair Winstanley went,
To fire the wick afar ;
And Plymouth in the silent night
Look'd out, and saw her star.

Winstanley set his foot ashore .
Said he, ' My work is done ;
I hold it strong to last as long
As aught beneath the sun.

' But if it fail, as fail it may,
Borne down with ruin and rout,
Another than I shall rear it high,
And brace the girders stout.

' A better than I shall rear it high,
For now the way is plain,
And tho' I were dead,' Winstanley said,
' The light would shine again.

' Yet were I fain still to remain,
Watch in my tower to keep,
And tend my light in the stormiest night
That ever did move the deep ;

' And if it stood, why then 'twere good,
Amid their tremulous stirs,
To count each stroke when the mad waves broke,
For cheers of mariners.

‘ But if it fell, then this were well,
That I should with it fall ;
Since, for my part, I have built my heart
In the courses of its wall.

‘ Aye ! I were fain, long to remain,
Watch in my tower to keep,
And tend my light in the stormiest night
That ever did move the deep.’

With that Winstanley went his way,
And left the rock renown’d,
And summer and winter his pilot star
Hung bright o’er Plymouth Sound.

But it fell out, fell out at last,
That he would put to sea,
To scan once more his lighthouse tower
On the rock o’ destiny.

And the winds broke, and the storm broke,
And wrecks came plunging in ;
None in the town that night lay down
Or sleep or rest to win.

The great mad waves were rolling graves,
And each flung up its dead ;
The seething flow was white below
And black the sky o’erhead.

And when the dawn, the dull, grey dawn,
Broke on the trembling town,
And men look’d south to the harbour mouth,
The lighthouse tower was down.

Down in the deep where he doth sleep,
Who made it shine afar,
And then in the night that drown’d its light,
Set, with his pilot star.

*Many fair tombs in the glorious glooms
At Westminster they show ;
The brave and the great lie there in state :
Winstanley lieth low.*

POEMS FROM 'MOPSA THE FAIRY'

(1869)

I

'WAKE, baillie, wake ! the crafts are out ;
Wake !' said the knight, ' be quick !
For high street, bye street, over the town
They fight with poker and stick.'
Said the squire, ' A fight so fell was ne'er
In all thy bailliewick.'
What said the old clock in the tower ?
' Tick, tick, tick ! '

' Wake, daughter, wake ! the hour draws on ;
Wake !' quoth the dame, ' be quick !
The meats are set, the guests are coming,
The fiddler waxing his stick.'
She said, ' The bridegroom waiting and waiting
To see thy face is sick.'
What said the new clock in her bower ?
' Tick, tick, tick ! '

II

My good man—he's an old, old man—
And my good man got a fall,
To buy me a bargain so fast he ran
When he heard the gipsies call :
' Buy, buy brushes,
Baskets wrought o' rushes.
Buy them, buy them, take them, try them.
Buy, dames all.'

My old man, he has money and land,
 And a young, young wife am I.
 Let him put the penny in my white hand
 When he hears the gipsies cry :
 ' Buy, buy laces,
 Veils to screen your faces.
 Buy them, buy them, take and try them,
 Buy, maids, buy.'

My fair lady's a dear, dear lady—
 I walked by her side to woo.
 In a garden alley, so sweet and shady,
 She answered, ' I love not you,
 John, John Brady,'
 Quoth my dear lady,
 ' Pray now, pray now, go your way now,
 Do, John, do !'

Yet my fair lady's my own, own lady,
 For I passed another day ;
 While making her moan, she sat all alone,
 And thus and thus did she say :
 ' John, John Brady,'
 Quoth my dear lady,
 ' Do now, do now, once more woo now,
 Pray, John, pray !'

III

' Master,' quoth the auld hound,
 ' Where will ye go ?'
 ' Over moss, over muir,
 To court my new jo.'
 ' Master, though the night be merk,
 I'se follow through the snow.

' Court her, master, court her,
 So shall ye do weel ;
 But and ben she'll guide the house,
 I'se get milk and meal.
 Ye'se get liltin' while she sits
 With her rock and reel.'

‘ For, oh ! she has a sweet tongue,
And een that look down,
A gold girdle for her waist,
And a purple gown.
She has a good word forbye
Fra a’ folk in the town.’

IV

A STORY

In the night she told a story,
In the night and all night through,
While the moon was in her glory,
And the branches dropped with dew.

’Twas my life she told, and round it
Rose the years as from a deep ;
In the world’s great heart she found it,
Cradled like a child asleep.

In the night I saw her weaving
By the misty moonbeam cold,
All the weft her shuttle cleaving
With a sacred thread of gold.

Ah ! she wept me tears of sorrow,
Lulling tears so mystic sweet ;
Then she wove my last to-morrow,
And her web lay at my feet.

Of my life she made the story :
I must weep—so soon ’twas told !
But your name did lend it glory,
And your love its thread of gold !

V

Drop, drop from the leaves of lign aloes,
O honey-dew ! drop from the tree.
Float up through your clear river shallows,
White lilies, beloved of the bee.

Let the people, O Queen ! say, and bless thee,
 Her bounty drops soft as the dew,
 And spotless in honour confess thee,
 As lilies are spotless in hue.

On the roof stands yon white stork awaking,
 His feathers flush rosy the while,
 For, lo ! from the blushing east breaking,
 The sun sheds the bloom of his smile.

Let them boast of thy word, ' It is certain ;
 We doubt it no more,' let them say,
 ' Than to-morrow that night's dusky curtain
 Shall roll back its folds for the day.'

VI

A TOWING SONG

When I sit on market-days amid the comers and the
 goers,

Oh ! full oft I have a vision of the days without alloy,
 And a ship comes up the river with a jolly gang of towers,
 And a ' pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy ! heave, hoy ! '

There is busy talk around me, all about mine ears it
 hummeth,

But the wooden wharves I look on, and a dancing,
 heaving buoy,
 For 'tis tidetime in the river, and she cometh—oh, she
 cometh !

With a ' pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy ! heave, hoy ! '

Then I hear the water washing, never golden waves were
 brighter,

And I hear the capstan creaking—'tis a sound that
 cannot cloy.
 Bring her to, to ship her lading, brig or schooner, sloop
 or lighter,
 With a ' pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy ! heave, hoy ! '

‘ Will ye step aboard, my dearest ? for the high seas lie
before us.’

So I sailed adown the river in those days without alloy.
We are launched ! But when, I wonder, shall a sweeter
sound float o’er us

Than yon ‘ pull’e haul’e, pull’e haul’e, yoy ! heave
hoy ! ’

. VII

The marten flew to the finch’s nest,
Feathers, and moss, and a wisp of hay :
‘ The arrow it sped to thy brown mate’s breast ;
Low in the broom is thy mate to-day.’

‘ Liest thou low, love ? low in the broom ?
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay,
Warm the white eggs till I learn his doom.’
She beateth her wings, and away, away.

‘ Ah, my sweet singer, thy days are told
(Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay) !
Thine eyes are dim, and the eggs grow cold.
O mournful morrow ! O dark to-day ! ’

The finch flew back to her cold, cold nest,
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay.
Mine is the trouble that rent her breast,
And home is silent, and love is clay.

VIII

Sweet is childhood—childhood’s over,
Kiss and part.
Sweet is youth ; but youth’s a rover—
So ’s my heart.
Sweet is rest ; but by all showing
Toil is nigh.
We must go. Alas ! the going,
Say ‘ good-bye.’

IX

On the rocks by Aberdeen,
 Where the whislin' wave had been,
 As I wandered and at e'en
 Was eerie ;
 There I saw thee sailing west,
 And I ran with joy opprest—
 Aye, and took out all my best,
 My dearie.

Then I busked mysel' wi' speed,
 And the neighbours cried, ' What need ?
 'Tis a lass in any weed
 Ay bonny !'
 Now my heart, my heart is sair.
 What's the good, though I be fair,
 For thou'lt never see me mair,
 Man Johnnie !

X

LIKE A LAVEROCK IN THE LIFT

I

It's we two, it's we two, it's we two for ay,
 All the world and we two, and Heaven be our stay.
 Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride !
 All the world was Adam once, with Eve by his side.

II

What's the world, my lass, my love !—what can it do ?
 I am thine, and thou art mine ; life is sweet and new.
 If the world have missed the mark, let it stand by,
 For we two have gotten leave, and once more we'll try.

III

Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride !
 It's we two, it's we two, happy side by side.
 Take a kiss from me thy man ; now the song begins :
 ' All is made afresh for us, and the brave heart wins.'

IV

When the darker days come, and no sun will shine,
Thou shalt dry my tears, lass, and I'll dry thine.
It's we two, it's we two, while the world's away,
Sitting by the golden sheaves on our wedding-day.

XI

Little babe, while burns the west,
Warm thee, warm thee in my breast ;
While the moon doth shine her best,
And the dews distil not.

All the land so sad, so fair—
Sweet its toils are, blest its care.
Child, we may not enter there !
Some there are that will not.

Fain would I thy margins know,
Land of work, and land of snow ;
Land of life, whose rivers flow
On, and on, and stay not.

Fain would I thy small limbs fold,
While the weary hours are told,
Little babe in cradle cold.
Some there are that may not.

XII

FAILURE

We are much bound to them that do succeed ;
But, in a more pathetic sense, are bound
To such as fail. They all our loss expound ;
They comfort us for work that will not speed,
And life—itself a failure. Aye, his deed,
Sweetest in story, who the dusk profound
Of Hades flooded with entrancing sound,
Music's own tears, was failure. Doth it read

Therefore the worse ? Ah, no ! So much to dare,
 He fronts the regnant Darkness on its throne.—
 So much to do ; impetuous even there,
 He pours out love's disconsolate sweet moan—
 He wins ; but few for that his deed recall :
 Its power is in the look which costs him all.

XIII

THE DOVE SAID 'GIVE US PEACE'

One morning, oh ! so early, my beloved, my beloved,
 All the birds were singing blithely, as if never they would
 cease ;

'Twas a thrush sang in my garden, 'Hear the story, hear
 the story !'

And the lark sang, 'Give us glory !'

And the dove said, 'Give us peace !'

Then I listened, oh ! so early, my beloved, my beloved,
 To that murmur from the woodland of the dove, my
 dear, the dove ;

When the nightingale came after, 'Give us fame to
 sweeten duty !'

When the wren sang, 'Give us beauty !'

She made answer, 'Give us love !'

Sweet is spring, and sweet the morning, my beloved, my
 beloved ;

Now for us doth spring, doth morning, wait upon the
 year's increase,

And my prayer goes up, 'Oh, give us, crowned in youth
 with marriage glory,

Give for all our life's dear story,

Give us love, and give us peace !'

XIV

THE SHEPHERD LADY

I

Who pipes upon the long green hill,
 Where meadow grass is deep ?
 The white lamb bleats but followeth on—
 Follow the clean white sheep.
 The dear white lady in yon high tower,
 She hearkeneth in her sleep.

All in long grass the piper stands,
 Goodly and grave is he ;
 Outside the tower, at dawn of day,
 The notes of his pipe ring free.
 A thought from his heart doth reach to hers :
 ‘ Come down, O lady ! to me.’

She lifts her head, she dons her gown :
 Ah ! the lady is fair ;
 She ties the girdle on her waist,
 And binds her flaxen hair,
 And down she stealeth, down and down,
 Down the turret stair.

Behold him ! With the flock he wons
 Along yon grassy lea.
 ‘ My shepherd lord, my shepherd love,
 What wilt thou, then, with me ?
 My heart is gone out of my breast,
 And followeth on to thee.’

II

‘ The white lambs feed in tender grass :
 With them and thee to bide,
 How good it were,’ she saith at noon ;
 ‘ Albeit the meads are wide.
 Oh ! well is me,’ she saith when day
 Draws on to eventide.

Hark ! hark ! the shepherd's voice. Oh, sweet !
 Her tears drop down like rain.
 ' Take now this crook, my chosen, my fere,
 And tend the flock full fain :
 Feed them, O lady, and lose not one,
 Till I shall come again.' .

Right soft her speech : ' My will is thine,
 And my reward thy grace ! '
 Gone are his footsteps over the hill,
 Withdrawn his goodly face ;
 The mournful dusk begins to gather,
 The daylight wanes apace.

III

On sunny slopes, ah ! long the lady
 Feedeth her flock at noon ;
 She leads them down to drink at eve
 Where the small rivulets croon.
 All night her locks are wet with dew,
 Her eyes outwatch the moon.

Over the hills her voice is heard,
 She sings when light doth wane :
 ' My longing heart is full of love.
 When shall my loss be gain ?
 My shepherd lord, I see him not,
 But he will come again.'

**A RHYMING CHRONICLE OF
INCIDENTS AND FEELINGS**

(1850)

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I. MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

THE TRADITION OF THE GOLDEN
SPURS

LISTEN to me,—
 I heard a story once, a legend old,
 Calmly and simply told
 By a young child ; who, if her words might be
 Fraught with past sighs and mournful imagery,
 Knew not the touching nature of her tale,
 Nor felt her young heart fail—
 Recounting troubles she could nothing know,
 With ancient battles almost out of mind,
 Warriors on History's page but half defin'd, 10
 And Saxon times, and manners left behind,
Ages ago.

Listen to me,—
 There is a little river, fed by rills,
 That winds among the hills,
 And turns and suns itself unceasingly,
 And wanders through the corn-fields wooingly,
 For it has nothing else to do but play
 Along its cheery way ;
 Not like great rivers that in locks are bound, 20
 On whom hard man doth heavy burdens lay,
 And fret their waters into foam and spray,
 This river's life is one long holiday
All the year round.

Listen and long !—
 It hears the bells of many churches chime,
 It has a pleasant time :
 The trees that bow to it their branches strong,
 Hide many birds that make its spring one song,
 And orchard boughs let fall their flowery wealth, 30
 To float away by stealth,

And land in tiny coves a mile below,
 Or round and round the stems of rushes veer
 Like snowy foam, but truly none is here,
 So calmly gurgle on the waters clear
With endless flow.

What means this boat ?
 And why across the stream as smooth as glass
 So calmly does it pass ?
 There is a weighty reason, one of note, 40
 And all the country knows it well by rote ;
 I saw, this morning, by the river's side,
 A fair and blue-ey'd bride ;
 She pass'd the bridge nor turn'd her foot that way,
 Though in her path towards the church it stood ;
 She came across the fields, and through the wood,
 And by the ferry-boat her way made good,
This very day.

Now the stream sings
 Through the wide common, gay with furze and broom,
 Sweet musk, and heather bloom ; 51
 Through pastures white with fieldfares' fluttering wings,
 Freckled with fern, and dropp'd with fairy rings ;
 Prattling, and telling ever, night and day,
 To all that pass that way
 The self-same tale that it has *always* done.
 What then ? the tale, if ancient, is most true,
 Sure as the steadfast hills ; why vainly sue
 For that which *is* not ? ' There is nothing new
Under the sun.' 60

No more of this,—
 I cannot bind its murmurs in my line,
 And into words confine
 The story of its wanderings and its bliss,
 Nor tell how its sweet waves the margin kiss ;
 Through the grey walls of the old Saxon town
 Let it come gently down,
 Let it come dancing brightly into view
 From under the old bridge, and gurgling swell
 Past the green bed of reeds where Edmund fell ; 70
 The Saxon Prince, of whom this tale they tell,
I tell to you.

The heathen Dane was in the land, he spread his tokens
wide,
Like running fire on moorlands dry he swept the country
side ;
The south fled down before his face, he left the north
forlorn,
He tore the bridges from their banks, and burn'd the
standing corn.

The herbs were green before his face, they waver'd in
the wind,
But with his foot he drank their lives, and left them
black behind.
As if his breath was poison's seed, his curse had blasting
power,
The grass along his pathway droop'd, and wither'd bud
and flower. 80

Like troops of demons from beneath, let loose awhile
from chains,
His thousands swarm'd upon the strand, and spread
upon the plains.
Upon a quiet Sabbath morn, they reach'd our fenny
shore,
And they that rang the church bells then, did never
ring them more.

They came across yon dewy slope, where scatter'd alders
grow,
And there a bloody field was fought, that long, long
time ago.
The summer sun arose betimes on murder, din, and rout,
And setting late, was all too soon to see that battle out.

It was upon the longest day the Danes and Saxons met,
And echoes as of clashing swords, 'tis said, are heard
here yet ; 90
Heard often on a summer noon, when all the land is
still,
With passing footsteps on the grass, and whispers from
the hill.

There lie, shut out from light and change, crush'd in
their crowded beds,

With spear and lance corroded deep and rusted arrow-
heads,—

There lie the bones of those who fell, where now with
heedless feet

Upon the barrow on the hill the rustic lovers meet.

It was upon the longest day (as learned men divine),
And ere the sun was fairly down, the moon began to
shine,

She cast abroad her waxen rays, and was a lovely sight,
So pale she look'd while all the west with ruddy red was
bright. 100

She shone without a cloud to shade her wan reproachful
face,

Till, near her time of going down, the sky grew black
apace :

Up from the south came driving mists, and fast before
her fled,

Heavy and black, as evil dreams about a murderer's bed.

Then many a soul in darkness deep pass'd upward from
the plain,

And many a curse on his false gods pour'd forth the
heathen Dane ;

And many a sigh from Saxon lips was breath'd for
coming day,

Breath'd vainly—as the life-blood fail'd, that ebb'd so
fast away.

Where was the Saxon Prince that night ? his scatter'd
force had fled ;

But he was not with them—nor laid at rest among the
dead— 110

The little river in his ears had sung that night, to guide
His footsteps to the bridge that spann'd its broad but
shallow tide.

The bridge was wider than the stream, and on its western
bank,

Beneath the arch a bed of reeds and sedge and rushes
dank,

And waterflags in thick array and broad-leav'd mallows
grew,

As still along the water's edge in that same place they do.

There did he rest his wearied head, and bathe his
stiffen'd hands,

While, closely all around, the reeds uprear'd their
sheltering bands :

There, spent with toil, his eyelids dropt in darkness
blank and dun,

Till through the guardian sedges peer'd the soon return-
ing sun. 120

Among the yellow flags declin'd, he sank into a dream,
Again beheld his castle burn, and heard his infants
scream—

Saw at their mother's breast the sword, and heard her
heart-sick cry—

Awoke—the river's face was sweet, and red the cloudy
sky.

Stirr'd in the morning air, the reeds bent down and
touch'd his brow,

A sweet and silent welcoming to his lone spirit now ;
A tree beside the bridge uprose, a crimson-tassel'd larch,
And past him flow'd with silver feet the river through
the arch.

O sweetly talk'd the river then, as if an angel sung,
And whisper'd to the tassel'd larch that near its margin
hung ; 130

And softly spoke the morning breeze, that lightly rais'd
his hair,

As if to seek the golden crown, which was no longer
there.

It came in dreamy, dreamy tones, half trouble, half
surprise,

It mourn'd his lot, but mourning soothed with its long-
heaving sighs :

It question'd much, and answer'd not to its own doubts
and fears,

But shook the reeds, till on his head they dropt their
morning tears

'Where was it gone that golden crown?' (the sweet voice seem'd to say)

'The Dane would wear it ne'er so well, nor with so mild a sway;

Why had yon shadowing larch grown old, nourish'd with sun and dew,

While human blessings prov'd so frail, so fleeting, and so few? 140

'Rivers of water took their course between the self-same hills,

And knew no change from age to age, nor touch of human ills.

But change was come to *him*,' it sigh'd, as still with mournful tone

It question'd with the Saxon Prince reclining there alone.

'Where were *they* now, his fair-hair'd boys?' (in whispers faint it sigh'd

With soft complainings at his feet, diffus'd upon the tide.)

'The river's life was better far, that long ago began, More to be envied than the fate reserv'd for mortal man.'

Ah! then, the river found a voice, and for herself she spoke;

In liquid cadences her song the morning silence broke, Divided with soft murmurs fraught, with comfort came the lay, 151

Condoling tones, of pity born, and thus she seem'd to say—

'Listen to me,—

My waters in the upland pastures rise,

Fed by the earth and skies;

Thence tend and set to the wide-flowing sea;

And not a hill that lies

Along my course but seeth her green sides,

Far down my glassy tides.

Oh, long—aye, long, these scatter'd trees have stood,

And long this stretching wood.— 161

But I was old

Ere they did first their budding germs unfold,

Or the green acorns fell,
That into their great parent oaks did swell.
I was a river when the earth was young,
And from my source I sprung,
And danc'd with joyous cadence, clear and strong,
My lonely paths along ;
Sweet melodies I sung
Ere there was ear of man to hearken to my song.

170

' On my untrodden brink
From age to age the willows lean'd to drink ;
Thick forests grew, the upland tracks to crown,
And crept like sunbeams down,
Through lapse of moving centuries gone by,
To me drawn slowly nigh !

I was a river then, and things from far
Conspir'd to give me beauty ; clouds as white
As wings of swans across me took their flight.

180

I wore the image of the morning star
Upon my bosom ! Yet to thee I sing
Of change and desolation—Time shall bring
A day of doom, a last, a closing strain
To all my music—hear it once again,
That, like a bird, must soon or late take wing,
O Saxon King !

' Listen to me !

There is a river—' (Oh, how soothing sad
A voice its murmurs had !)

190

'There is a river, sighing tenderly,
The "streams whereof make glad
The city of our God." Though spring-tide rain,
Though early dews, no longer should maintain
The rivers of this world ;
E'en though great mountains, from their places hurl'd,
Should fall, uprooted, in the boiling sea,
And earth be mov'd from her stability—
There is a river that on high doth flow,
Nor ebb nor changing know.

200

There is a tree, that of its wave receives,
Yielding twelve manner of immortal fruits—
The tree of life, whose leaves

Are for the healing of the nations—lo !
 She spreadeth forth her roots,
 And by that river's margin she doth grow,
 And long shall grow when I have ceas'd to sing,
O Saxon King !

‘ Woe unto thee !
 The crown of gold is fallen from thy head ; 210
 And all thy hopes lie low with the unburied dead !
 Woe to the land ’ (it pin’d) ‘ and woe to me ! ’
 In murmur’d tones,
 Long sobs, and dirge-like moans,
 Lost in the rustling of ~~the~~ wavy sedge
 Crowding its dimpled edge.
 After a while, returning to his ear
 With more of comfort in its plaintive cheer
 It tried a closing strain,
 And told of that sweet river once again— 220
 Of infant spirits, blissful dwellers there,
 Amid pavilions fair.
 Then sigh’d, ‘ Lament no more
 Thy weary sojourn on my lonely shore !
 When *I*, with all my waves shall cease to be,
 And lose my waters in the whelming sea,
 Thy soul with comfort fraught
 Shall grieve no more for aught
 Of all her bitterness, of all her care !
 There *is* a river by whose margins fair, 230
 Thou shalt remember *me*,
 And this, thy day of grief, where grief no more may be ! ’
 Then, bubbling on her way,
 She seem’d to tell of some not distant day,
 Some bright hereafter hailing,
 When, blest inheritor of joy unfailing,
 Upon his head should rest
Another crown of gold ;
 Where guardian angels their bright wings unfold
 In crystal streets, on hallow’d errands blest ; 240
 Where, to and fro,
 The mission’d spirits go—
 Dwellers in light on the immortal shore,
 And from the throne celestial waters flow
For evermore !

So talk'd she on that far-off day, while reeds were
rustling nigh,
And told her story to a heart too weary for reply ;
Too utterly with grief bow'd down, too sorely press'd
with care,
To think it other than a dream, or heed, if such it were.
The morning ripen'd into noon, while there conceal'd he
slept, 250
While Danish scouts the country rode, and Saxon mothers
wept ;
They sought, but breeding swallows *knew*, and mark'd
the reedy place,
And, from their nests beneath the arch, they watch'd his
silent face.

Before the dew began to fall, about the turn of day,
The careless herd-boy led his kine, upon their homeward
way.

He brought them to the water's edge, where stooping
down to drink
With large meek eyes they saw the king, and started
from the brink.

They saw, though dull of ear and eye the herd-boy might
not know :

'Back, back,' he cried, and back they turn'd, with
cautious steps and slow.

And never from those gazing eyes one moment took
their own, 260

But peer'd at him, that lay as still, and silent as a stone.
Upon the ridge of yonder hill, which heaves toward the
sky,

Two storm-struck elms their wither'd arms held stiffly
up on high.

Between them dipp'd the blood-red sun, and gaz'd upon
the stream,

'Till, like a flood of molten ore, she glow'd beneath his
beam.

And the moon rose from her repose, as pale as pale could
be,

Just where the river rounds the hill, behind the church
came she.

Adown its length she dropp'd her light, a winding
 wavering ray,
Bright, 'as the pathway of the just,' that shines 'till
 perfect day.'
The land was silent as the moon, and peaceful as her
 light ; 270
A headlong stream far westward roll'd, the current of
 the fight.
Beneath the bridge the Saxon Prince beheld the fading
 West,
And saw the last returning bird descend into her nest.
Softly ! the sleeping echoes, rous'd on pasture, wood,
 and lea,
Repeating, sent along the stream clear notes of mirth
 and glee.
Along the river's winding brink the bridegroom at her
 side,
In the moonlight, on palfrey white, rode down a silent
 bride.
With joyance meet, and music sweet, her Danish
 followers came,
And laudits shower'd on her blue eyes, the young and
 fair-hair'd dame.
With veil thrown back, and bridle slack, along the river's
 side, 280
Oft glancing at her Danish lord, she rode, the Saxon
 bride.
Towards the bridge, this ancient bridge, where sleeps the
 moonlight now,
She came, with music in her train and jewels on her brow ;
While, glittering on the river's breast, the stars like
 diamonds lay ;
Among the sedge, at its green edge, she took her home-
 ward way.
All beautiful with silv'ry light the bride drew in the rein,
Across, into the bed of reeds, she gaz'd, and gaz'd
 again,—
And suddenly, the maiden blush died out from her fair
 cheek,
Her flashing eyes forgot full soon their glances soft and
 meek !

A face,—a form, one instant seen, had wrought that
potent spell ; 290

Ah, treachery ! Alas, she knew that silent face too
well—

‘ Methinks upon the river’s brink, that somewhat gleams
and stirs,

Methinks I see beneath the arch, the flash of golden
spurs.’

A start,—a cry,—the crash of swords, the war-cry of the
Dane ;

The heathen warriors bound his hands with that white
palfrey’s rein.

Upon his brow, so stern and pale, the gentle moonlight
play’d ;

He stood erect upon the bridge, the man she had betray’d.

Bound and begirt with glittering spears, ’twas but
a moment’s space,

He turn’d him to the Saxon bride, and look’d her in the
face ;

And Danish lord, and Danish slave, fell back with
muttering tone ; 300

The bridegroom started from her side, and left her there
alone.

And there was silence on the bridge, a deep pause and
a long—

Alone she stood, her fair lips clos’d, mute as her marriage
song.

Alone, unveil’d, till, surely aim’d, came from the river’s
side

An arrow from a Danish bow, and struck the Saxon
bride.

Lament, O river ! and be sad ; her face was fair and
sweet ;

Before the king she bow’d her head, and perish’d at his
feet !

Lament ; for near thee lingers yet *his* memory, not in
vain ;

A witness grey to that night’s work, the bridge doth still
remain.

Fast, headlong, as returning tides that sweep some
 rocky strand, 310
 With heathen yells and savage cries rush'd back the
 murderous band ;
 And bridal weeds and marriage veil, down trampling,
 fiercely sped,
 And rear'd the battle-axe on high above the Saxon's
 head.

'Now curse,' they cried, 'this new, new name, whereon
 thy people call :
 Else, by the rites of Odin's cave ! thou this same night
 shalt fall.
 Or let thy new god shield thee from the old gods if he
 will.'
 But he stood firm upon the bridge,—unheeding, cold,
 and still.

Against these time-worn stones he lean'd, when back his
 captors came—
 There scorn'd the life that must be bought by loss of
 Christian name.
 Tempted ;—but what were life, and land, and proffer'd
 crown to him ? 320
 The murderous fire, o'er wife and child, had scarcely yet
 grown dim !

O Martyr blest ! Confessor firm ! true to thy meed of
 light !
 'Mid savage taunts and heathen cries 'thy lamp went
 out by night.'
 Merged is thy realm, thy nation changed, that still
 reveres thee dead,
 And cherishes the latest words that Saxon Edmund said.
 Upon the bridge he struck his hand, tradition keeps the
 tale,
 Prophetic warning strange he gave ere fleeting life did
 fail.
 'Woe worth the maid, whose marriage train by *thee*
 shall cross the tide,—
 Ill fare the foot, by *thee* to pass, of bridegroom or of
 bride !'

Grey arch, bedeck'd with mosses fair, the swallows crowd
 thine eaves ; 330
 And homage from the constant sun thine aged front
 receives ;
 The moon adorns thee there—the wind plays hollow
 music sweet ;
 And wantons in the feathery reeds, that flourish at thy
 feet.

To thee the market girl comes down, with basket on her
 arm,
 By thee, with thoughtful face, returns the matron to the
 farm ;
 A tinkling sweet, beneath his feet, the blind old beggar
 hears ;
 The school-boy with his satchel leans, half dreaming, on
 thy piers.

Across the bridge, in gay attire, to fair or statute bound,
 The rustic people fearless pass, from all the country round.
 Across the bridge, in sable clad, comes on the funeral
 train ; 340
 When evening, like a mourner, dons her own dark suit
 again.

Across the bridge, grown old and hoar, since that far-
 distant day,
 Hath nothing pass'd that spell to break, to bear that
 charm away ;
 And still it spans the silvery flood, for all the vale
 beside,
 But never since hath known the foot of Bridegroom or
 of Bride !

NOTE

About the year 870, the Danes under Hingvar, invaded East Anglia, which was then governed by Edmund, a king of singular virtue and piety.

After defending his people with great valour, Edmund was at last defeated in a battle fought near Hoxne in Suffolk. Being hotly pursued, he concealed himself under a bridge called Gold-bridge. The glittering of his golden spurs discovered him to a newly-married couple

who were returning home by moonlight, and the bride betrayed him to his enemies.

The heathen Danes offered him his crown and his life if he would deny the Christian faith ; but he continued steadfast, and when he was dragged on to the bridge, he pronounced a malediction (or warning) on all who should afterwards pass over it on their way to be married : the dread of which is still so strong in the neighbourhood, that it is said no bride or bridegroom has ever been known to pass over it to this day.

THE TWO MARGARETS

No. I.—MARGARET IN THE XEBEC

‘ Now, concerning this man (Robert del Angelo) little further is known than that he served in the King’s army, and was wounded in the battle of Marston Moor.

‘ After the battle of Naseby, finding himself a marked man, he quitted the country, taking with him the child whom he had adopted, she being then about three years of age ; and he made many voyages between the different parts of the Mediterranean and Levant.’

RESTING within his tent at close of day
A wailing voice his scanty sleep beset :
He started up—it did not flee away—
’Twas no part of his dream, but still did fret
And pine into his heart, ‘ Ah me—ah me ! ’
Broken with heaving sobs most mournfully.

Then he arose, and greatly wondering,
All wearily towards the sound he went,
Much doubting whence those grieving sobs might spring,—
Shortly he came before a soldier’s tent,
Where, the tears falling through her hands, he found
A little maiden weeping on the ground.

And backward in the tent, an aged crone
Upbraided her unkindly more and more,
But sunk her chiding to an undertone
When she beheld who stood before the door,
And calm’d her voice, and dropp’d her lifted hand
And answer’d him with accent soft and bland.

No, the young child was none of hers, she said,
But she had found her near the ashes white
Of a yet smouldering tent, her infant head
All shelterless, she through the dewy night
Had slumber'd on the field—ungentle fate
For a lone child, so soft and delicate !

‘ And I,’ quoth she, ‘ have tended her with care,
And thought to be rewarded of her kin,
For by her rich attire and features fair
I know her birth is gentle ; yet within
The tent unclaim’d she rests, to pine and weep,
A burden I would fain no longer keep.’

Still, while she spoke the little creature wept ;
Till yearning pity touch’d him for the flow
Of those sad tears, and to his heart there crept
A wish to have her for his own, and so
He, his kind arms outstretching tenderly
Said—‘ Little Madam, wilt thou come with me ? ’

Then she left off her crying, and a look
Of doubtful wonder stole into her eyes ;
The sullen frown her dimpled face forsook ;
She let him take her, and forgot her sighs,
Contented in the stranger’s arms to rest,
And lay her baby head upon his breast.

And thus he took her for his own, and brought
Into his tent the orphan to remain ;
But surely stranger plaything ne’er was sought
By roving bachelor on battle-plain
Than his, the prattling child that on the floor
Play’d at his feet within the tented door.

Of race, of country, or of parentage,
Her lisping accents nothing could unfold ;—
No questioning could win to read the page
Of her short life— she left her tale untold,
And home and kin thus early to forget,
She only knew,—her name was—Margaret.

Then in the dusk upon his arm it chanc'd
That night that suddenly she fell asleep ;
And he look'd down on her like one entranc'd,
And listen'd to her breathing still and deep,
As if a little child, when daylight clos'd,
With half-shut lids had ne'er before repos'd.

Softly he laid her down from off his arm,
With earnest care and new-born tenderness :
Her infancy, like wonder-working charm,
Laid hold upon his love ; he stayed to bless
Her slumbering head ; and going forth that night,
He sought a nurse to tend his young delight.

And day by day his heart she wrought upon,
And won her way into its inmost fold—
A heart which, but for lack of that whereon
To fix itself, would never have been cold ;
And opening wide, now let her come to dwell
Within its strong unguarded citadel.

She, like a dream, unlock'd the hidden springs
Of his past life, and set their current free
To talk with him of long-forgotten things,
Wrought in his childhood and his infancy ;
Yet inly to repeat with mournful tone,
' Hopes of my childhood, whither have ye flown ? '

Long may *thy* childhood last, and late depart,
Long dwell with thee, young blue-ey'd Margaret !
Thou baby mistress of a soldier's heart
That wonders it should love thee so—and yet
Pondering thy friendless state, is well content
To deem thee solely for *his* solace sent.

A gleam of light upon a rainy day,
A new-tied knot that must be sever'd soon ;
At sunrise brought within his tent to play,
And hurried from the battle-field at noon ;
While face to face in hostile ranks *they* stood,
Who should have dwelt in peace and brotherhood.

But in the morning e'er the fight began,
While yet were distant far the rebel bands,
She heard at intervals a booming gun ;
And she was pleas'd, and, laughing, clapp'd her hands,
Till *he* came in with troubled look and tone,
Who chose her desolate to be his own.

And he said, ' Little Madam, now farewell,
For there will be a battle fought ere night.
God be thy shield, for He alone can tell,
Which way may fall the fortune of the fight.
To fitter hands the care of thee pertain,
My dear, if we two never meet again.'

Then he gave money shortly to her nurse,
And charg'd her that she should depart in haste,
And leave the plain, whereon the deadly curse
Of war should light with ruin, death, and waste,
And all the ills that must its presence blight,
E'en if proud victory should bless the right.

' But if the rebel cause should prosper, then
It were not good among the hills to wend ;
But journey through to Boston in the fen,
And wait for peace, if peace our God shall send ;
And if my life is spared, I will essay,'
Quoth he, ' to join you there as best I may.'

So then he kiss'd the child, and went his way ;
But many troubles roll'd above his head ;
The sun arose on many an evil day,
And cruel deeds were done, and tears were shed ;
And hope was lost, and loyal hearts were fain
In dust to hide,—ere they two met again.

He found her after many days, when care
And grief had been at work upon his soul,
And for a while half dispossess'd her there,
With their exacting sway and stern control—
And with her dimples was again beguil'd,
As on her nurse's knee she sat and smil'd.

And he became a voyager by sea,
And took the child to share his wandering state ;
Since from his native land compell'd to flee,
And hopeless to avert her monarch's fate ;
For all was lost that might have made him pause,
And, past a soldier's help, the royal cause.

And thus roll'd on long days, and months, and years,
And Margaret within the Xebec sail'd ;
The lulling winds made music to her ears,
The bright sea hues her gentle eyes regal'd,
And much she lov'd to see the dolphin spring,
Where deep the water-bows were glittering.

The gay sea plants familiar were to her,
As daisies to the children of the land ;
Red wavy dulse the sunburnt mariner
Rais'd from its bed to glisten in her hand ;
The vessel and the sea were her life's stage—
Her house, her garden, and her hermitage

And there she had a cabin of her own,
For beauty like an elfin palace bright,
Adorn'd with Venice glass, like crystal stone,
That cast around a many-colour'd light ;
And there with two caged ringdoves she did play,
And feed them carefully from day to day.

Her bed with silken curtains was enclos'd,
White as the snowy rose of Guelderland ;
On Turkish pillows her young head repos'd,
And love had gather'd with a careful hand
Fair playthings to the little maiden's side,
From distant ports, and cities parted wide.

She had two myrtle plants that she did tend,
And think all trees were like to them that grew ;
For things on land she did confuse and blend,
And chiefly from the deck the land she knew,
And in her heart she pitied more and more
The steadfast dwellers on the changeless shore.

Green fields and inland meadows faded out
Of mind, or with sea images were link'd ;
And yet she had her childish thoughts about
The country she had left—though indistinct
And faint as mist the mountain head that shrouds,
Dim in the distance, as Magellan's clouds.

And when to frame a forest scene she tried,
The ever-present sea would still intrude,
And all her towns were by the water's side,
The background of all scenes that memory view'd ;
And rocks and yellow sand would intervene,
And waves surround her fancied village green.

And she would dream and ponder more and more,
When the land sounds reach'd her in dying swells ;
And when in harbour, lying off the shore,
She heard the chiming of cathedral bells,
She lov'd to think them Angels' hymns, although
Deep in her inmost heart she knew it was not so.

Her soul was like unto an ocean shell,
That ever yields the key-note of its home ;
Whether her fancy to a shaded dell,
Or quiet slope, or leafy glade, would roam,
Or sun itself upon an upland hill,
The voices of the sea would haunt her still.

So she grew on, the idol of one heart,
And the delight of many—and her face,
Thus dwelling chiefly from her sex apart,
Was touch'd with a most deep and tender grace—
A look that never aught but nature gave,
Artless, yet thoughtful ; innocent, yet grave.

Strange her adornings were, and strangely blent :
A golden net confin'd her nut-brown hair ;
Quaint were the robes that divers lands had lent,
And quaint her aged nurse's skill and care ;
Yet did they well on the sea-maiden meet,
Circle her neck, and grace her dimpled feet.

She, like a queen among her vassals seem'd,
Who thought good fortune follow'd in her wake ;
And, counting her their guardian angel, deem'd
That prospering winds were sent them for her sake ;
And strange, rough prayers and vows they nightly made
For the fair child that in the Xebec stay'd.

Clear were her eyes, that daughter of the sea,
Sweet, when uplifted to her ancient nurse,
She sat, and commun'd what the world could be ;
And rambling stories caus'd her to rehearse,
How Yule was kept, how maidens toss'd the hay,
And how bells rang upon a wedding day.

But they grew brighter when the evening star
First trembled over the still glowing wave,
That bath'd in ruddy light, mast, sail, and spar ;
For then, reclin'd in rest that twilight gave,
With him who served for father, friend, and guide,
She sat upon the deck at evening-tide.

Then turn'd towards the west that on her hair
And her young cheek shed down its tender glow,
He taught her many things with earnest care,
That he thought fitting a young maid should know,
Till stars came out, and, rais'd in twilight dim,
Fell on the sea the sailors' vesper hymn.

Then many psalms he caus'd her to repeat,
And sing them at his knees, reclin'd the while,
And told her of the sabbath evenings sweet,
And the pure worship of her native Isle :
Told of the good deeds of the worthy dead,
With prayers devout by holy martyrs said.

Withdrawn, and heedless of the passing time,
She heard the story of her native land,
With many a legend grac'd and ancient rhyme
Of wild adventures on a hostile strand ;
Till at the end he made her tears to flow,
With telling of his royal master's woe.

And of the stars he taught her, and their names,
And how the chartless mariner they guide ;
Of quivering light that in the zenith plays,
Of monsters in the deep sea caves that hide ;
Then chang'd the theme to fairy records wild,
Enchanted moor, elf dame, or changeling child.

But blooming childhood will not always last,
And storms will rise e'en on the tideless sea :
His guardian love took fright, she grew so fast,
And he began to think how sad 'twould be
If he should die, and pirate hordes should get,
By sword or shipwreck his fair Margaret.

It was a sudden thought ; but he gave way,
For it assail'd him with unwonted force ;
And with no more than one short week's delay,
For English shores he shap'd the vessel's course ;
And ten years absent saw her landed now,
With thirteen summers on her maiden brow.

And so he journey'd with her, far inland,
Down quiet lanes, by hedges gemm'd with dew,
Where wonders met her eye on every hand,
And all was strange and beautiful and new—
All, from the forest trees in stately ranks,
To yellow cowslips trembling on the banks.

All new,—the clear still heat, the evening shades,
The ruddy glow through cottage casement bright,
The white-hair'd children, and the rustic maids,
The hinds returning in the failing light,
The streamlet dimly in the dusk espied,
And gipsies camping on the broad road-side.

And far he took them on, and farther still,
The maiden and her nurse ; till journeying,
They saw an ancient city on a hill,
And heard at intervals its clear bells ring :
And its tall spires stood out against the sky,
With mossy walls enclos'd, and portals high.

There, dwelt a worthy matron whom he knew,
To whom he did good service in the war ;
Shielding her household from the plundering crew
When neither worth could save, nor age nor law ;
And to her house he brought his care and pride,
A-weary with the way, and dull and sleepy-ey'd.

And he, the man whom she was fain to serve,
Delay'd not shortly his request to make,
Which was, if aught of her he did deserve,
To take the maid, and rear her for his sake,
To guard her youth, and let her breeding be
In womanly reserve and modesty.

And that same night into the house he brought
The costly fruits of all his voyages—
Rich gleaming stones, by wandering merchants bought
In Turkish mosques and Persian palaces,
With ingots pure, and coins of Venice mould,
And silver bars, and bags of Spanish gold ;

And costly merchandise of foreign lands,
With golden stuffs, and shawls of Eastern dye ;
He gave them over to the matron's hands,
With jewell'd gauds, and toys of ivory,
To be her dower on whom his love was set,—
His dearest child, fair Madam Margaret.

Then he entreated that, if he should die,
She would not cease her guardian mission mild.
Awhile, as undecided, linger'd nigh,
Beside the pillow of the sleeping child,
Sever'd one wandering lock of wavy hair,
Took horse that night, and left her unaware.

And it was long before he came again—
So long that Margaret was woman grown ;
And oft she wish'd for his return in vain,
Calling him softly in an undertone ;
Repeating words that he had said the while,
And striving to recall his look and smile.

If she had known—Oh, if she could have known—
The toils, the hardships of those absent years—
How bitter thralldom forc'd the unwilling groan—
How slavery wrung out subduing tears,
Not calmly had she pass'd her years away
Chiding half pettishly the long delay.

But she was spar'd that knowledge ; she was calm,
While the red flames ascended from the deck ;
Saw not the pirate band the crew disarm ;
Mourn'd not the scatter'd spars, the blacken'd wreck :
She did not dream, and there was none to tell
That fetters bound the hands she lov'd so well.

Sweet Margaret—withdrawn from human view,
She spent long hours beneath the lime-tree's shade,
The stately trees that in the garden grew,
And, overtwin'd, a towering shelter made ;
She mus'd among the flowers, and birds, and bees,
In winding walks, and bowering canopies.

Or wander'd slowly through the ancient rooms,
Where oriel windows shed their rainbow gleams ;
Where tapestried hangings, work'd in Flemish looms,
Display'd the story of king Pharaoh's dreams ;
Of tedious robe by Grecian matron wrought,
Of clustering grapes the spies from Eshcol brought.

At last she reach'd the bloom of womanhood,
After five summers spent in growing fair ;
Her face betoken'd all things dear and good,
And softly floated her descending hair ;
Young feeling gave her eyes their glances meek,
And richness of musk roses to her cheek.

Be not too hasty in your flow, ye rhymes,
For Margaret is in her garden bower ;
Delay to ring, ye soft cathedral chimes,
And tell not out too soon the noonday hour ;
For *one* is drawing near the portals wide
Of the old city by the green hill's side.

He journey'd on, and as he near'd the gate,
He met with one to whom he nam'd the maid,
Inquiring of her welfare, and her state,
And of the matron in whose house she stay'd.
'The maiden dwelt there still,' the townsman said ;
'But, for the ancient lady,—she was dead.'

He further said, she was but little known,
Although reputed to be very fair,
And little seen (so much she dwelt alone)
But with her nurse at stated evening prayer ;
So seldom pass'd her sheltering garden wall,
Or left the gate at quiet evening-fall.

Flow softly, rhymes—his hand is on the door ;
Ring out, ye noonday bells, his welcoming—
'He went out rich, but he returneth poor ;'
And strong—now something bow'd with suffering.
And on his brow are trac'd long furrow'd lines,
Earn'd in the fight with pirate Algerines.

Her aged nurse comes hobbling at his call ;
Lifts up her wither'd hand in dull surprise,
And, tottering, leads him through the pillar'd hall ;
'What ! come at last, to bless my lady's eyes !'
Dear heart, sweet heart, she's grown a likesome maid—
Go, seek her where she sitteth in the shade.'

The noonday chime had ceas'd—she did not know
Who watch'd her, while her ringdoves flutter'd near ;
While, under the green boughs in accents low,
She sang unto herself, she did not hear
His footstep till she turn'd, then rose to meet
Her guest, with guileless blush and wonder sweet.

But soon she knew him,—ran with quicken'd pace,
And threw her gentle arms around his neck,
Leaning her fair cheek to his sunburnt face,
As long ago upon the vessel's deck ;
As long ago she did in twilight deep,
While heaving waters lull'd her infant sleep.

So then he kiss'd her, and in fondest tone,
While proudly parting her unbraided hair,
He said : ' I did not think to see thee grown
So fair a woman,'—but a touch of care
The deep-ton'd voice through its caressing kept,
And, hearing it, she turn'd away and wept.

Wept,—for an impress on the face she view'd—
The stamp of feelings she remember'd not ;
His voice was calmer far, but more subdued,
Not like the voice long lov'd and unforgot !
She felt strange sorrow and delightful pain—
Grief for the change, joy that he came again.

O pleasant days that follow'd his return,
That made his captive years pass out of mind ;
But Margaret, a scholar apt to learn,
He taught *one* lesson more than he design'd.
And two full weeks he stay'd with her ; content
To find her beautiful and innocent.

And then, he told her that he must depart
Upon the morrow with the earliest light ;
And it displeas'd and pain'd her at the heart :
And she went out, to hide her from his sight.
And in a garden alley shelter'd deep
She threw herself among dusk leaves to weep.

And she bemoan'd herself,—till suddenly
She heard a step, and, starting up to flee,
She met him face to face,—and tenderly
He question'd with her what her grief could be ?
Till at the last, all blushing red for shame,
She said it was because she had *no name*.

And he replied, ' Dear child, I do not know
Thy father's race, but none thy tears can blame.
Wouldst thou possess the thing for which they flow ?
Get thee an husband then, and bear *his* name.
Is there none here who thy kind thoughts hath won ?'
And, faltering, she answer'd, ' Truly none.'

But he, in fatherly and kindly mood,
Said, 'Lady, daughter, it would please me well
To see thee wed ; for know, it is not good
That a fair woman thus alone should dwell.'
She said, 'I am content it should be so,
If when *you* journey, I may with you go.'

And when he heard, he fell into a pause,
A long, half-doubting pause of deep content ;
Then thought he—'It were wronging nature's laws
That this should be.' In troubled wonderment
He stood. He ne'er had *ask'd* a boon so high ;
Though *offer'd*, it was hard to put it by.

Then he said, 'Lady, look into my face ;
Consider well this scar upon my brow ;
I have had all misfortunes but disgrace,
And shall I seek so great a blessing now ?
Be not of gratitude deceiv'd—I know
Thou think'st it is thy duty—I will go.

I read thy meaning, and I go from hence,
Skill'd in thy reasons, though my heart be rude ;
I will not wrong thy gentle innocence,
Nor take advantage of thy gratitude.'
Then she said, 'Go, but few of womankind
Shall be more sad than she you leave behind.'

'Still wouldst thou speak ? Ah, lady, thou art young ;
Shall this rough voice, this face, thy bright dreams dim ?
Some fairy over me a spell hath flung,
And it beguiles thee.' But she answer'd him—
'The face is fair to me, without a spell ;
And for the voice, I love its accents well.'

So softly she drew nearer to his side,
Beseeching him, and saying, 'Do not go ;'
Till, but in tones that falter'd, he replied,
'Truly, I love thee well ; but dost thou know
That I shall soon grow old ?' She said, 'In truth,
Your age will better shield my helpless youth.'

Then, from her earnest words her heart he knew,
And lean'd towards her in the dusky shade ;
Saying, ' Forgive me, if it seem'd untrue ;
It was so like a dream, beloved maid—
A flattering dream, with morning light to flee—
A dream of happiness not meant for me.'

And soft, as ringdoves cooing, with spread wings,
She murmur'd to him, underneath the trees,
' And do you think there are no other things
Than morning dreams that go by contraries ?
'Twas surely strange to doubt the voice that woo'd,
And call a young maid's love cold gratitude.'

And so she won a name that eventide,
Which he gave gladly, but would ne'er bespeak,
And she became the rough sea-captain's bride,
Matching her dimples to his sunburnt cheek ;
And chasing from his voice the touch of care,
That made her weep when first she heard it there.

One year—one long, bright year of happiness,
That glided like a quiet stream away—
Then came her hour of trouble and distress :
It was the evening of a sultry day :
There was not air the thread-hung flowers to stir ;
Or float abroad the filmy gossamer.

Towards the trees his steps her husband bent ;
Pacing the grassy walks with restless feet :
And he recall'd, and ponder'd as he went,
All her most duteous love and converse sweet,
Till summer darkness settled deep and dim ;
And dew from bending leaves dropt down on him.

The flowers sent forth their nightly odours faint—
Thick leaves shut out the starlight overhead ;
While he told over, as by strong constraint
Drawn on, her childish life on shipboard led,
And beauteous youth, since first low kneeling there,
With folded hands, she lisp'd her evening prayer.

Then he remember'd how, beneath the shade,
She woo'd him to her with her lovely words,
While flowers were closing, leaves in moonlight play'd,
And in dark nooks withdrew the silent birds.
So ponder'd he that night in twilight dim ;
While dew from bending leaves dropt down on him.

The flowers sent forth their nightly odours faint—
When, in the darkness waiting, he saw one
To whom he said—' How fareth my sweet saint ? '
Who answer'd—' She hath borne to you a son ; '
Then, turning, left him,—and the father said,
' God rain down blessings on his welcome head ! '

But Margaret !—*she* never saw the child ;
Nor heard about her bed love's mournful wails ;
But to the last, with ocean dreams beguil'd,
Murmur'd of troubled seas and swelling sails—
Of weary voyages, and rocks unseen,
And distant hills in sight, all calm and green. . . .

Woe and alas !—the times of sorrow come,
And make us doubt if we were ever glad !
So utterly that inner voice is dumb,
Whose music through our happy days we had !
So, at the touch of grief, without our will,
The deep heart's melody is mute and still.

Woe and alas ! for the sea-captain's wife—
That Margaret who in the Xebec play'd—
She spent upon his knee her baby life ;
Her slumbering head upon his breast she laid.
How shall he learn alone his years to pass ?
How in the empty house ?—woe and alas !

She died.—And in the dim Cathedral aisle
They made her grave,—and there, with fond intent,
Her husband rais'd, his sorrow to beguile,
A very fair and stately monument—
A tomb that still the careless vergers show—
The tomb of—Margaret Del Angelo.

A woman's figure, with the eyelids clos'd,
 And the calm head declin'd in slumber sweet—
 One hand upon a sculptur'd ship repos'd,
 An anchor and an ensign at her feet.
 And, carv'd upon the borders of her vest,
 The motto of her house,—‘*He giveth rest.*’

There is an ancient window, richly fraught,
 And fretted with all hues, most deep and bright ;
 And in its upper tracery is wrought
 An olive branch, and dove with feathers white—
 An emblem meet for her, the tender dove,—
 Her heavenly peace and duteous earthly love.

Crimson, and green, and gold, and violet,
 In twisted knots, and wildly tangled bands,
 Amid heraldic shields and banners set,
 Fall softly on the snowy, sculptur'd hands ;
 And, ev'ry sunny day reflected, rest
 The dove and olive branch upon her breast.

II

MARGARET BY THE MERESIDE

LYING imbedded in the green champaign
 That gives no shadows to thy silvery face,
 Set in the middle of a verdant plain,
 Only the clouds their forms upon thee trace ;
 No steadfast hills on thee reflected rest,
 Nor waver with the dimpling of thy breast.

O, silent Mere ! about whose marges spring
 Thick bulrushes, to hide the reed-bird's nest ;
 Where the shy ousel dips her glossy wing,
 And, balanc'd in the water, takes her rest :
 While, under bending leaves, all gem-array'd
 Bright dragon-flies lie panting in the shade.

Warm, stilly place,—the sun-dew loves thee well,
 And the green sward comes creeping to thy brink ;
 And poor-man's-weather-glass, and pimpernel,
 Lean down to thee their perfum'd heads, to drink ;
 And heavy with the weight of bees doth bend
 White clover, and beneath thy wave descend.

Where does the scent of beanfields float so wide,
At intervals returning on the air,
As over mead and fen to thy lone side,
To lose itself among thy zephyrs rare,
With scents from hawthorn copse, and new-cut hay,
And blooming orchards lying far away ?

Thou hast thy sabbaths, when a deeper calm
Descends upon thee, quiet Mere ! and then
The sound of ringing bells, thy peace to charm,
From grey church-towers comes far across the fen :
And the light sigh, where grass and waters meet,
Seems thy meek welcome to their visits sweet.

Thou hast thy lovers, though the angler's rod
Dimples thy surface seldom ; and the oar
Fills not with silvery globes thy fringing sod,
Nor sends long ripples to thine osier'd shore ;
And few would care with mimic art to trace
The lights and shadows on thy changing face.

Thou hast thy lovers truly ; 'mid the cold
Of northern tarns the wild-fowl dream of thee,
And, keeping thee in mind, their wings unfold,
And shape their course, high soaring, till they see
Down in the world, like molten silver, rest
Their goal ; and, screaming, plunge them in thy breast.

Fair Margaret,—who sittest all day long
On the grey stone beneath the sycamore,
The bowering tree with branches lithe and strong,
The only one to grace the level shore—
Why dost thou wait ? for whom, with patient cheer,
Gaze yet so wistfully adown the Mere ?

Thou canst not tell—thou dost not know—alas !
Long watchings leave behind them little trace ;
And yet, how sweetly must the mornings pass
That bring that dreamy calmness to thy face ;
How quickly must the evenings come, that find
Thee still regret, to leave the Mere behind.

Thy cheek is resting on thy hand ;—thine eyes
Are like twin violets, but half unclos'd ;
Calm as the azure stillness of the skies :
Never more peacefully in love repos'd
A mother's gaze upon her offspring dear,
Than thine, upon the long, far-stretching Mere.

Sweet innocent ! Thy yellow hair floats low
In rippling undulations on thy breast ;
Then stealing down, the parted love-locks flow,
Bath'd in the sunbeams, on thy knees to rest ;
And touch those idle hands, that folded lie,
Having, from toil and sport, alike immunity.

O silent Being ! with what touching grace
Childhood attends thee, nearly woman grown ;
Her dimples linger yet upon thy face,
Like dew upon a rose, but newly blown ;
And thy long tender sighs, upheaving, seem
Calm as an infant's sighing in a dream.

What are thy thoughts made up of ? Do they stray
Abroad with wand'ring swallows in the air,
Or sport themselves with circling flies, that play
Under thy sycamore ;—then here and there,
Float idly, turn'd aside by roving bee,
Or by a wand'ring cloud led easily ?

No, down the Mere, as far as eye can see,
Where its long reaches fade into the sky,
Thy constant gaze, fair child, rests lovingly ;
But neither thou, nor any, can descry
Aught but the osier banks and rustling sedge,
And flocks of wild-fowl splashing at their edge.

And yet 'tis not in expectation hush'd,
That thy mute rosy lips, half-pouting, close ;
No flutt'ring hope to thy young heart e'er rush'd,
Nor disappointment troubled its repose—
All satisfied with gazing evermore
Along the open Mere and reedy shore.

The brooding wren flies pertly near thy seat ;
Thou wilt not move, to mark her glancing wing.
The timid sheep browse close before thy feet ;
And heedless at thy side the thrushes sing ;—
So long among them thou hast spent thy days,
They know that harmless hand thou wilt not raise.

Thou wilt not lift it up—not e'en to take
The foxglove bells that flourish in the shade,
And put them in thy bosom ; not to make
A posy of wild hyacinths, inlaid
Like bright mosaic in the mossy grass,
With freckled orchis, and pale sassafras.

Gaze on ;—take in, the voices of the Mere,—
The break of shallow water at thy feet,
Its splash among long weeds, and grasses sere,
And its low sobbing ;—hollow music, meet
For ears like thine ; listen and take thy fill,
And dream of it by night, when all is still.

Full sixteen years have slowly pass'd away,
Young Margaret, since thy fond mother here
Came down, a six months' wife, one April day,
To see her husband's boat go down the Mere,
And track its course, till, lost in distance blue,
In mellow light it faded from her view.

It faded, and she never saw it more ;—
Nor any human eye ;—oh, grief ! oh, woe !
It faded,—and return'd not to the shore ;
But far above it still the waters flow—
And none beheld it sink, and none could tell
Where coldly slept the form she lov'd so well !

But that sad day, unknowing of her fate,
She homeward turn'd her still reluctant feet ;
And at her wheel she spun, till dark and late,
The evening fell ;—the time when they should meet ;—
Till the stars pal'd that at deep midnight burn'd—
And morning dawn'd, and he was not return'd.

And the bright sun came up—she thought too soon,
And shed his ruddy light along the Mere ;
And day wore on too quickly, and at noon
She came, and wept beside the waters clear.
'How could he be so late ?'—and then hope fled ;
And disappointment darken'd into dread.

He *never* came ; and she, with weeping sore,
Peer'd in the water-flags unceasingly,
Through all the undulations of the shore,
Searching for that which most she fear'd to see.
At length she took home sorrow to her heart ;
And brooded over its cold, cruel smart !

And then all hopelessly she sat alone,
And mourn'd, refusing to be comforted,
On the grey stone—the moss-embroider'd stone,
With the tall sycamore above her head.
Till, after many days, a broken oar,
Hard by her seat, was left upon the shore.

It came, a token of his fate—the whole,
The sum of her misfortunes, to reveal—
As if sent up in pity to her soul,
The tidings of her widowhood to seal ;
And put away the pining hope forlorn,
That made her grief more bitter to be borne.

And she was patient,—through the weary day
She toil'd, though none was there her work to bless ;
And did not wear the sullen months away,
Nor call on Death to end her wretchedness ;
But, lest her grief should overflow her breast,
She toil'd as heretofore, and would not rest.

But her work done, what time the evening star
Rose over the cool water, then she came
To the grey stone, and saw its light from far,
Drop down the misty Mere white lengths of flame ;
And wonder'd whether *there* might be the place
Where the soft ripple wander'd o'er *his* face.

Unfortunate—in solitude forlorn
She dwelt, and thought upon her husband's grave ;
Till, when the days grew short, a child was born
To the dead father underneath the wave :
And it brought back a remnant of delight—
A little sunshine to its mother's sight. . . .

Across the pastur'd lea, across the wold,
There stands a mansion grey. At early dawn,
Beneath its lofty roof, its turrets old,
On that same day another child was born ;
And, with a father's welcome, laid to rest,
Cradled in down, from its young mother's breast.

Cradled in down, and canopied with plumes,
As helpless as the orphan babe he slept,
Though rob'd in lace, and lull'd in stately rooms,
While hireling nurses watch about him kept.
And on the new-born heir his father's eyes
Dwelt often, with a strange and sweet surprise.

Far different was their birth, and such should be
The tenor of their lives. The early years
Of one pass'd on with laughter, and with glee ;
The other, nurtur'd amid sighs and tears,
Grew, like a young plant in a quiet glade,
Nourish'd with dew, and budding in the shade.

But not like careless childhood's were her ways,
Deep quiet dwelt upon her forehead fair :
And oft abroad she fix'd her tender gaze,
As if she saw a face that was not there—
Would turn, as if a voice had touch'd her ear
A tone that other mortals could not hear.

And years flew on—and she was still the same ;
Nor human language she had learn'd to speak ;
Her lips were mute ; but seasons went and came,
And brought fresh beauties to her maiden cheek.
And all the day upon the sunny shore
She sat and mus'd beneath the sycamore.

Strange sympathy ! she watch'd and wearied not ;
Haply unconscious what it was she sought :
Her mother's tale she easily forgot ;
And if she listen'd, no warm tears it brought.
Though surely in the yearnings of her heart
The unknown voyager must have had his part.

Unknown to her ;—like all she saw, unknown ;
All sights were fresh, as when they first began ;
All sounds were new, each murmur, and each tone,
And cause and consequence she could not scan :
Forgot that night brought darkness in its train,
Nor reason'd that the day would come again. . . .

There is a happiness in past regret,
As echoes of the harshest sounds are sweet.
The mother's soul was struck with grief, and yet,
Repeated in the child's, 'twas not unmeet,
That echo-like, *that* grief a tone should take,
Painless, but always pensive, for *her* sake.

For her dear sake, whose patient soul was link'd
By ties so many to the babe unborn—
Whose hope, by slow degrees become extinct,
For evermore had left her child forlorn,
Yet left no consciousness of want or woe ;
Nor vague regret that these things should be so.

It was a dream, this world—an endless dream,
To which all sounds and senses minister'd ;
Mingling things true with things that did but seem,—
She held mute converse, without sign or word,
With sighs of whispering grass, wind-lifted flowers,
Slight voices that pass by dull ears like ours.

Truly her joys were limited and few ;
She watch'd in shade the summer day glide on ;
She had fond thoughts about the glittering dew,
And saw fantastic shapes at even-song—
Unreal delights ! the restless spirit deems ;
Pity her not.—Her griefs ?—they too were dreams !

So sat she always underneath her tree,
The fairest thing the country round had seen,
With her small hand dropp'd idly on her knee,
Clad in her russet-hat and gown of green—
Through the spring mornings, gemm'd with melted rime,
All through hay-harvest, and through gleaning time.

And oft the lady from the mansion old,
With her young son, the silent child would seek,
Teach him his arms around her to enfold,
With prattling words to kiss her dimpled cheek ;
Till from her side he lightly broke away,
Busied with floating straws or leaves at play.

And oft, grown older, to the Mere he stray'd,
And sported on its shores the whole day long ;
When that kind lady in her grave was laid,
With all her tender thoughts so deep and strong—
Having pass'd lightly from her husband's mind ;
Lost there,—but for the child she left behind.

Oh, pleasure for itself that boyhood makes !
Oh, happiness about the fields to roam !
He watch'd, down crouching in the hawthorn brakes,
While the small white-throats built their hanging home ;
Follow'd with cautious oar the wild duck's track,
And trac'd the landrail to her nestlings back.

And yet they took him from his fenny wold,
The reedy Mere, and all his pastimes there—
The place where he was born, and should grow old,
If God his life so many years should spare—
From the lov'd haunts of childhood, and the plain,
And pasture lands of his own broad domain.

And so he came when wheat was in the sheaf ;
And ripen'd hazel nuts were dropping down ;
While, whirling slowly, fell the yellow leaf ;
And standing beans were turning sere and brown ;
He came from his grey turrets to the shore,
And sought the maid beneath the sycamore.

He sought her, not because her tender eyes
Would brighten at his coming ; for he knew
No thought of him within her heart would rise,
When once he had departed from her view ;
Though *he* had link'd affections pure and mild
With the sweet image of the silent child.

For boyhood, like maturity, is prone
To reverence what it cannot understand ;
And he had thought, while thus she mus'd alone,
Some saintly reason kept her on the strand.
Some dream of heaven within *her* heart must glow,
Who took so little heed of aught below.

A fishing wallet from his shoulders slung,
With bounding foot he reach'd the mossy place ;
A little moment gently o'er her hung,
Put back her hair, and look'd into her face ;
Heav'd a short boyish sigh of kind regret,
And call'd her ' Margaret, sweet Margaret.'

And he said ' Listen,—hear what I shall say ;
Only this once thy dreamy eyes withdraw ;
To-morrow I am going far away,—
Ah ! look at me before I leave the shore.
But why should I say this ? You'll soon forget :
Farewell, till I return, sweet Margaret !'

And wilt thou think on him when he is gone ?
No—thou wilt gaze, though thy young eyes grow dim,
And thy soft cheek become all pale and wan ;
Still thou wilt gaze ; and spend no thought on him :
There is no sweetness in his voice for thee,
Nor beauty in his young heart's gaiety !

But wherefore linger in deserted haunts ?
Why of the past, as if yet present, sing ?
The yellow Iris on the margin flaunts,
The shore is gay with Hyacinths in spring,
And dappled skies are mirror'd in the wave,
Where stooping swallows dip their wings to lave.

But, Margaret—Ah ! thou art there no more—
And thick dank moss creeps over thy grey stone ;
Thy path is lost, that skirted the low shore
With willow grass, and speedwell overgrown ;
Thine eye has closed for ever, and thine ear
Drinks in no more the music of the Mere !

The Baron's son shall come again in Spring,
Well pleased to angle in the waters clear ;
And some kind offering in his hand will bring,
To cast into thy lap, O maiden dear !
Some silver brooch, some clasp to bind thy vest,
And heave and glimmer on thy guileless breast.

And he shall wonder why thou art not here,
The solitude ' with smiles to entertain ; '
And gaze along the reaches of the Mere ;
But he shall never see thy face again ;
Shall never see upon the reedy shore
Pale Margaret beneath her sycamore !

FAMILY PICTURES

HEAVY drops of rain are falling,
Murky clouds float out to sea ;
While alone I stand for shelter
Underneath the lofty tree—
Under the broad tree that shadows
Half the roof above our heads,
Where beside the threshold growing,
Like a tow'ring tent it spreads.

It is tide-time, and the shower
Passes over like a frown :
Yellow sunbeams through the branches
To my feet come trembling down.
Light air wand'ring through the garden
Shakes the rain from leaf and bell,
From the bending Persian lily,
And the foxglove's laden cell.

Looking in at open windows,
Many thoughts my spirit pain,
Rooms long dwelt in, I shall seldom
Wander through their lengths again.
To their walls the sunbeams creeping
Rows of quiv'ring gems have strung ;
Little rainbows, struck from mirrors,
All about the cornice flung.

Round upon the walls are hanging
Pictures in their moulded frames,—
From my childhood I have lov'd them—
Taught to call them by their names.
Household treasures—we shall take them
With us when we journey on ;
Forms of those who went before us,
Records of the dead and gone !

Ah ! I see *that* one, which chiefly
To my childish thoughts was fair ;
In a high alcove she sitteth,
With a white rose in her hair.
Climbing woodbines round her growing
Fling their trailing tendrils wide,—
And her meek eyes seem to follow,
As we move from side to side.

Hollyhocks about her planted
Proudly rear their spiral heads,
And one primrose-tinted blossom
On her feet its petals sheds.
Rang'd upon the steps are standing
Flow'ring Balsams in a row,
Hanging bunches of Laburnum
Train'd upon the trellis grow.

From her side her little daughter
Looks up sweetly in her face,
With a bodice like her mother's,
And a cap of shadowing lace.
Smiling through her flaxen ringlets,
Primly, prettily, she stands—
Two young ringdoves in a basket
Holding in her dimpled hands.

Lady, with the placid forehead,
Holy in its deep repose—
With a shuttle in thy fingers,
Twisted in thy hair a rose—
Did no oft-return'd vexations
Baffling, in thy pathway rise ?
If they did, no trace they've left us
In the summer of thine eyes !

What ?—did nothing come to ruffle
Or disturb thy quiet mood ?—
Was thy kindness always valued,
And thy meaning understood ?—
Hadst thou never days of trouble,—
Fretful moments such as these ?
Were thy children ne'er unruly,
Nor thy husband hard to please ?

I have stood and look'd upon thee
Often when I was a child—
Thinking that when I grew older
I would be as calm and mild :
Thinking it would be no trouble
Such a quiet to maintain—
Once escap'd from irksome lessons—
Oh ! delusion deep and vain !

For alas ! As years roll'd onward,
Reason grew—and feeling came ;
Thou wert farther off than ever,
Though my longings were the same.
Then I wish'd that I had liv'd in
Such a time as gave thee birth ;
Ere the ' blessing of our Fathers ',
Peace, had vanished from the earth.

Strange, that when we long for something
Which can never be obtain'd,
In our hearts we turn to others
Who we deem the boon have gain'd.
But we always think they sojourn
In some very distant clime,
Or are far divided from us
By the silent lapse of time.

Far away,—or dead before us,—
Time and distance are the same ;
For uncertain lights and shadows
In the space between they frame.
I have thought if far-off manners,
Or the old-world life were mine,
Free from restless throbbings, Lady,
I had felt a peace like thine !

Now I know 'tis but illusion ;
There is silence in my heart ;
Murmurous thoughts, like stars at morning,
Shrink within me and depart.
No ! the past was not more happy,
'Tis the present that mistakes ;
These the types of favour'd moments
We have lengthen'd for *their* sakes,

Who have run their course before us,
Having left their forms behind,
Till in dreaming their times happy,
To our own we are unkind.
Human cares and human passions
In ourselves we feel and see,
Not upon their quiet faces—
Thus we think that they were free.

Simple thoughts they were to harbour :
Truly life had changes then—
Working days as well as Sabbaths,—
Was it e'er without them ? When ?
Never ! Endless, shifting changes
Swift as waves each other chase,
Come upon God's men and women,
Fit them for a changeless place.

Yet there are some resting-places—
Life's untroubled interludes—
Times when neither past nor future
On the soul's deep calm intrudes.
For such hour the painter waited—
Fix'd the look that still they wear,
And their children's children gazing,
Think that they were free from care !

But it seems, when all is spoken,
That a quiet so serene
Never in our stillest moments
Us and change can come between.
For though all we love be round us,
Growing kinder day by day,
Still our hearts will mutely ponder :
‘ Shortly these may flee away.’

Or if in our happy bosoms
All such anxious fears be laid,
Tender feelings for another
On the brow will cast a shade—
Work within the ‘ little chamber’,
Dark and silent, of the heart,
Pitying the slighted stranger,
Taking the oppressed’s part.

Dwellers near the restless ocean,
Though they hear the blackbird sing,
And the bearded barley rustle,
And the young lambs bleat in spring ;
Though Cathedral bells may reach them,
Clear and sweet across the lea,
Yet for ever in the background
Looms the murmur of the sea !

So it is with human feeling,
Even in our summer days,
When our hearts are light with laughter,
And our ears are fill’d with praise ;
There are thoughts for ever present,
Held at distance though they be,
Always heard—though unobtrusive,
Like the murmur of the sea.

What are they repeating always ?
From their tones the mind receives
Chast’ning in the brightest mornings,
Counsel in the clearest eves.
Do not give them form and language,
Look them seldom in the face,
Lest they start into the foreground,
Take and keep the foremost place.

Yet we must have been ungrateful :
Evil blinds us to the good ;
Paradise is taken from us—
Who shall tell us where it stood ?
Dreaming of the four-leav'd shamrock
Never given to mortal lot,
We awake, and in our folly
Weep, because we have it not !

In the early days of childhood
When we spoke our mother tongue,
So that few could understand us
But our nurses kind and young ;
Folded in their arms at even,
While they press'd our baby heads,
Some sweet lullaby to sing us,
Ere they laid us in our beds ;—

We would lift a tiny finger,
And uncloze our sleepy eyes,
Pointing at the stars that twinkling
Glimmer'd in the shady skies ;
Babbling to our loving nurses
That we wish'd the stars would fall,
For, among our nursery playthings,
They would be the best of all.

And full lovingly they answer'd,
' That if we were always good,
Some fine night they should not wonder
If they dropp'd into the wood :
If they dropp'd among the dock leaves
Where the willow wort was sown :
Then, as soon as it was morning,
We should have them for our own ! '

So they sooth'd us, and, contented,
In their arms we fell asleep :
While they pray'd the holy angels
Watch around our beds to keep.
So they pleas'd and so beguil'd us
With their promises of good ;
But the little stars we found not
Down among the underwood !

We should think it strange if children
We were reckon'd, still the same
Even in the wayward wishes
That in them we fondly blame :
Very strange, though still we long for
Things that Reason still debars,
And although we all our lifetime
Have been longing for the stars.

We must gaze on them no longer,
Leave them to their high estates,
Heaven's pavement lies above them—
Think upon the golden gates :
Let them shine, as when beforetime
The Most High his might unfurl'd,
Bright as when they sang together
On the birthday of the world.

And when Time shall bring her doomsday,
Will a dirge be sung on high ?
Will they miss the one departed
From the myriads of the sky ?
Matters not, so we inherit,
Borne beyond their fiery cars,
Ancient homes appointed for us,
Mansions older than the stars.

So that we may hear, and marvel
When our ears shall catch a tone,
As it were the voice of harpers
Harping round about the throne—
So our feet may reach that country
Lov'd and long'd for from afar,
And our eyes may see the beauty
Of the Bright and Morning STAR !

KATHERINE OF ARRAGON TO
HENRY VIII

ON HEARING OF HIS INTENTION TO DIVORCE HER

PRINCE, I have heard—it ill beseems
That *thou* the tale repeat ;
Still less that *I* should bend my knee
To plead or to entreat.
Reproaches ! No ! thou need'st no fear
That I such words should use ;
E'en could'st thou stoop to sue me back,
My heart must now refuse.

Far in my own, my native land,
Beneath its sunny skies,
Are dwelling those by thee estrang'd,
Who would have dried mine eyes :
But no ! I would not have them back
My bitter tears to see :
I would not have them meanly think
Or proudly speak of thee !

Prince, in the upper fields of air
(If sages deem aright),
A planet compass'd in a ring
Speeds on its ceaseless flight ;
For evermore encircled thus
It tracks yon desert blue,
And onward as the planet rolls
The ring rolls onward too.

Go, like the planet, wander forth
On passion's stormy sea ;
Like the bright ring, my faithful love
Must still encircle thee !
Thou canst not check, shalt not escape,
Its tribute deep and free,
An offering of the only grace
That still remains to me !

Take back thy gifts—I heed them not,
 Since of thyself bereft ;
 Take my young daughter from my arms,
 The only solace left :
 Bring the fair rival in thy love
 My sad estate to view ;
 But hope not to estrange my heart,
 For that thou canst not do !

Oh, bring not up the beauteous past,
 Kind memory ! let it rest
 For ever shrouded far from sight
 Deep in my bleeding breast :
 Forbear to mock with past delight
 A grief beyond control :
 Look back no more, since all is lost—
 Forget—forget, my soul !

MIMIE'S GRASS NEST

In the quiet of the garden,
 While beside the nut-trees walking,
 Came our little sister to us.—‘ Pardon,’
 Said she, ‘ if I interrupt your talking,
 I have got a grass nest to display you,
 O do come and sit in it, I pray you :
 By myself I made it : there will be
 Room enough within for you and me.’

Merrily before us dancing
 She look'd up into our faces ;
 Then again towards her grass nest glancing,
 Made, returning to it, a few paces.
 ‘ I'll go make it ready. Will you follow ?
 O it's like a bird's nest, round and hollow.
 Gardener says, those linnets in the vine
 Have not got a better nest than mine.’

‘ We would come,’ we said, she flitting
 On before us, to make ready.
 When we reach'd the lawn, we found her sitting,
 With all state, and aspect grave and steady,

In her nest. 'Sit down,' she said : 'I made it
Of the new-mown grass, with trees to shade it,
And then set it round with this white May,
And red Peonies, to make it gay.'

On the beauty of the dwelling
Gave we plenteous gratulation ;
Then said, 'Madam, we await your telling
Of what wing'd sweet-throated tribe or nation
You may be.' 'Bird's life,' in accents musing,
'Would not suit with such as I for choosing,'
Said she ; 'but a Fairy I will be,
And you in this house shall live with me.

'Oh ! yes, this shall be my Palace,
Or my fairy ring the rather,
This gold tulip I will have for chalice,
And this branch for sceptre, which my father
Who rules six enchanted castles bravely,
Sent me !' 'Cry you mercy !' said I gravely,
'What mistakes we mortals make at best—
I *had* thought this palace was a nest !

'Now I see, with eyes compliant,
'Tis a palace, and enchanted—
That which seem'd an oak tree is a giant,
These which I thought Sumachs near it planted
Are two dragons, ragged-tooth'd and spiteful,
Set to guard us, and these songs delightful
Come from fairies, who can, when they please,
Change to birds, and sing upon the trees !'

'Yes, it is so,' said she gaily ;
'And you two shall be Princesses ;
You must know that knights and damsels daily
Come to me for aid in their distresses.
Now I sit in state, and pray your Graces,
Tell me, wherefore have you left your places ?
In all fairy learning I am vers'd :
I will hear the youngest Princess first !'

Then the youngest Princess, pausing,
Look'd around to aid invention,
Smiles which hover'd round her red lips causing
Me, who watch'd, to fathom her intention.
She look'd much like one who had no sorrow
Worth the telling, so one needs must borrow,
Meet to reach the blue-ey'd Fairy's ear,
Who sat scepter'd on the grass to hear.

In a forest, Fairy Dame,
Stands my Father's Palace :
Well he loves me ; and my name
Is the Princess Alice.

Trees of right great age and girth,
Thickly round it planted,
Scare the sons of outer earth
From its glades enchanted.

Few of mortal race that dare
Those deep woods to enter,
Fewer far that reach the fair
Palace in the centre.

Yet of mortal race are we,
Though we look undaunted
On its shadow'd mystery,
And its sunlight haunted.

There the dwarfish people fell
Have their habitations,
There thy elfin kindred dwell
By their tribes and nations :

There the ripen'd citron breaks
From the branch untasted ;—
Let the man beware who takes
Of that banquet wasted !

Hands invisible shall snatch
Sword or staff for payment ;
Things unseen shall deftly catch
At his flutt'ring raiment.

There do smiling faces peep
Out from beeches hollow,
Beckoning on to defiles deep—
Woe to all that follow !

There the white-rob'd phantoms glide,
With their hands behind them,
Crying out—' O, cease to ride—
Take these hands and bind them ! '

Let him 'ware to slack his rein,
Or regard their faces,
Lest to serve them he be fain
In their desert places.

There, above-ground flits and roams
The wisp-light before us ;
And beneath, the toiling gnomes
Sing their evil chorus :

When the clouded sun goes in—
' Waiting for the thunder '—
We can hear their revel-din
The moss'd greensward under :

And, I tell you, all the birds,
On the branches singing,
Utter to us human words,
Like a silver ringing.

Oh ! my father hath in truth
Bearing high and stately ;
And my mother's face in youth
Might be lauded greatly.

Long time were they wed—but child
Had not—son nor daughter—
Till my sainted mother mild,
Near some running water,

Spinning once in mossy glade
With her Maids of honour,
And the ash-tree's greenest shade
Softly cast upon her—

She was 'ware of fingers four,
With impassion'd gesture,
(One small hand and nothing more)
Plucking at her vesture.

'Sit ye still, my maids,' she cried,
Rising up serenely ;
'I would walk this rill beside
Over-arch'd so greenly.'

Fast the little hand took hold,
By the stream it drew her ;
Red rays through the fir-trees old
Trembled down unto her :

She could hear two small feet pace
Closely on beside her,
But to see the spirit face
(Saith she) was denied her ;
And she follow'd to a place
Where the stream grew wider.

There were steeping-stones, and green
Grew the cresses round them ;
Bright the waters were between,
Where the sun-rays found them.

She look'd up, and naught could see
But some grey doves dozing,
In a noontide reverie
Their red eyelids closing.

In the heat the fir-trees thick
Never mov'd asunder,
And albeit her heart beat quick,
It was but with wonder.

She look'd down, was naught below
Save the shallow water,
And the little hand let go,
Thus far having brought her !

Quoth she then (with no more dread
Than by silence made is),
'Wherefore, little hand, hast led
Me from my fair ladies ?'

She could hear a rustling sound
As of doves descending,
And soft voices near the ground
With the stream's voice blending.

Natheless, doves were none, and grave
Words came sweet before her—
'Is this, sooth, that woman brave,
That fair queen, Eudora ?'

'Will she bear us by her aid
Safe across the water,
With our grey wings shut ?' It sayde,
'Hast thou yet besought her ?'

'Nay !' the answ'ring voice replied,
Scantly to her reaching ;
'But her human heart is wide,
And needs no beseeching !'

'Aye,' quoth she, ' 'tis even so ;
Voice, thou speakest truly !
Let the things I see not, know
I will bear them duly !'

As a snowflake falling white,
One the other follows,
Fast they settled, soft and light,
As a flight of swallows,

On her vest and on her arms—
'Thanks, King Meroc's daughter,'—
So she bore them safe from harms
Straight across the water.

Scarce her foot had touch'd the bank
With the wondrous burden,
Than she saw them, rank by rank—
Sooth, an ample guerdon—

Creatures beautiful and rare,
Turn'd they all to greet her—
Somewhat more than human fair,
And with voices sweeter.

Sprang they down to earth, and trod
Each with bearing knightly :
' Rise up straightway from the sod,—
Horses ! ' cried they, lightly.

And the horses, from the ground,
Rose up at their calling ;
Rose up with a snorting sound,
And with bridles falling.

Spake the foremost, set in selle,
Safe across the water,
' Madam, queen, I wish thee well,
Thee, thy prince, and daughter ! '

Quoth my mother, ' Mock me not
With thy words unkindly,
Daughter, knight, I have not got ; '
But she answer'd blindly.

Loud he laugh'd, and tall he grew,
Sitting straight before her,
' My good wishes ay come true,
O fair queen Eudora ! '

' Farewell, stream ! My foe's deep hate
Keeps us not asunder,
Madam Queen, thy ladies wait,
Wait for thee, and wonder ! '

' Spells upon the margin laid—
Charms upon the water—
Hast thou broken by thine aid,
Good king Meroc's daughter ! '

On the self-same day at noon,
One short twelvemonth after,
Of my birth the tidings soon
Fill'd the place with laughter.

On that day sweet voices rang
In my father's palace,
And the birds, I tell you, sang—
'Welcome, Princess Alice!'

Then the small tree-people came
With their gratulations,
And each matron fairy-dame
Of the green-clad nations,

Gliding to my mother's bed,
Gave her low-voic'd greeting,
Wishing on my infant head
For all good things meeting.

Up by thousands blithe and small
Came they in the gloaming,—
'Wish ye joy,' they cried to all
Whom they met in roaming.

Here and there in silken sheen,
Soft their garments flutter'd ;
Here and there for babe and queen
Their good wishes utter'd.

'Thanks, fair Dames !' My father cried,
'Here, Sir Page, my chalice !
Happy seasons ye betide,
And the sweet maid Alice :

'This I drink to your good health,
As my bounden duty ;
The dear saints increase your wealth,
And prolong your beauty !'

Ere the word was utter'd, they
Crowded to the portals,
And with laughter keen did say—
'Oh ! these dull immortals !'

On the day that I was wean'd,
One came to my chamber,
On a golden stick she lean'd,
With a head of amber.

She was aged, swart, and bent,
But her speech was cheery,
And she totter'd as she went,
As with travel weary.

'Mother ! for thine infant dear,'
Quoth she, tartly speaking,
'Have I got a present here
Worthy of her seeking.'

Straightway, beautiful as light,
Fair in limb and feature,
From her bosom sprang a Sprite,
A winged childlike creature.

Oh ! to me, to me she fled
Ere the words were spoken ;
And the ancient Fairy said—
'Know, by this same token,

'That she nestles at thy heart,
Loth from thee to sever—
If she one day shall depart,
Best it be for ever !

'Little Princess, hold her dear,
Know, for all her dimples,
Potent Sprite she is, as e'er
Work'd with wand or simples.'

We were playmates the year round
In a change of pleasure,
With her glamour spells she found
Heaps of unus'd treasure.

When we feasted in the fern
Growing round the palace,
Easy 'twas for her to turn
Acorn cup to chalice,

And to call up elfins gay
With us there to revel,
When the ruddy King of Day
Peer'd in broad and level.

Me she endlessly beguil'd—
Fairy, who can blame her ?
Look'd up in my face and smil'd,
Well those smiles became her !

In my bosom she did sleep,
With my dreams she blended,
Visions such as make me weep
Now, to feel them ended !

Aye, indeed ! and sooth to say,
Birds did sing at dawning,
' Play on, little Princess, play—
Merry go the morning.'

It was she who made them sing,
With her chain she bound them ;
Like a garment she did fling
Glamour light around them :

And within the magic hall
Of my Father's palace,
Bid the prankish elves to call,
' Welcome, Princess Alice ! '

When we look'd into the night
Through the wicket peering,
Wondrous things there were for sight,
Wondrous things for hearing.

Then the shadows of the trees
Stretch'd their long arms nigher,
And the spirit of the breeze
Touch'd for us her lyre ;

Came and whisper'd at our eaves
Melodies entrancing,
With a train of yellow leaves
In her pathway dancing :

While the sleeping birds she rock'd
Through the forest flying,
And the minstrel's cadence mock'd,
In the turrets sighing.

Ah ! methinks I still behold,
While I tell the story,
Springing arches, portals bold,
Stretch out gaunt and hoary.

In a vision fair and clear,
Truly still I see them ;
Fairy !—I have held them dear—
Wherefore did I flee them ?

Silver white the moonbeams sleep
On the almond thicket,
Red as rust the sunbeams creep,
Through the palace wicket.

While the stork upon the roof
Keeps unmov'd his station,
And the swallow sits aloof
From his habitation :

And the linnet's throat is sweet,
With his peers conferring,
While at noonday in the heat
Not a leaf is stirring :

And the waters on their way
Eddy round the cresses,
And the whisp'ring reeds at play
Bend to their caresses :

Turrets bright with sunny air—
Hills above them swelling—
Forest-girdled stands the fair
Spirit-haunted dwelling.

But one lot must come to all
Holding mortal station ;
In the year is spring and fall,
Changing and mutation !

I awoke at dawn of day
Once, and, round me glancing,
I beheld the ancient Fay
To my couch advancing.

At my feet awhile she stood,
Then, her mantle raising,
Peer'd at me beneath her hood
With a keen-ey'd gazing.

Quoth she then, ' Behold, I come
On a thankless mission ; '
Nothing answer'd I, struck dumb
By the wrinkled vision.

' Come thou here, my dainty Sprite,'
Quoth the ancient Fairy ;
And it fled on wings of light,
Meteor-like and airy—

Flew to *her*—' Give back, give back,'
Cried I, ' stern despoiler ! '
Vainly might I pray, alack !
How could mortal foil her ?

Coldly did she turn away,
Bearing off my treasure,
Answer'd mine entreaties, ' Nay,
Get thee to thy pleasure.

' There is sunshine on the grass,
Check'd with light that quivers,
There's a fountain smooth as glass
Where the aspen shivers :

' Let the shadow of thy face
Drop upon it, daughter,
'Tis a picture fair to trace
On the dimpling water.

' Nay, be still, fond fool ! good sooth !
Vain is thine imploring,
She who goes, must go ! in truth
There is no restoring :

' That I tell thee, lay to heart—
*Better loss and dangers—
Troubled rest and aching heart
Ne'er to thee be strangers ;*

*Better truly grief and pain
In thy soul be swelling,
Than (sweet Spirit !) she again
Make with thee her dwelling !*

*' Oh ! a second time, Princess !
Ask not that, I pray thee !
Alter'd form and chang'd caress
Then might well affray thee ! '*

From my chamber she did pass,
Pass, and left me lonely ;
I look'd out, and on the grass
Play'd bright sunbeams only :

I went forth, but ne'er a bird
Round about the palace
Singing in the trees I heard,
' Welcome, Princess Alice ! '

Oh ! they sang at their ' sweet will ',
Goldfinch, thrush, and linnet—
Somewhat miss'd I nathless still,
And I ne'er could win it.

For some cadence sure was mute,
Or had died and faded,
That erewhile as woodland flute
All the glens pervaded.

The green people all the day
Of their forms were chary,
I heard not their laughter gay,
Elf or prankish fairy :

Prattling tongues and busy feet,
They had all departed,
Ne'er a straggler, me to greet,
In the pathway started.

Green the fern about me grew,
In familiar places ;
And the cowslips, wet with dew,
Bow'd their modest faces.

From the palace of my birth,
From each forest vista,
Pass'd a somewhat of their worth
With my heart's lost sister !

In the wing'd and blue-cy'd Fay,
Sweet enchantment centred ;
With her flight they fled away,
And much sadness enter'd.

In the sultriness of noon,
And when shadows lengthen'd,
In the broad light of the moon,
Still my sorrow strengthen'd.

In the hills where we did play
Round each marble column,
While—the night to wile away—
Music sweet and solemn

Floated over all the place ;
And each burning cresset,
Casting light on every face,
Told that joy did bless it :

When the lamp-flames many-hued
Gleam'd throughout the palace,
And with rainbow tints embued
Silver cup and chalice,

Marble walls and marble floor,
Snowy waving curtain
Shedding on them, white before
Gorgeous hues uncertain :

And on glowing plants which, rang'd
By the pillars, flourish'd,
Dropp'd carnation tints that chang'd
With the flame that nourish'd—

Opal shades, as movements light
Of a robe might fan it,
To descend on myrtle white,
Balsam or pomegranate :

When the moonbeams, pure and blue,
With their rich light blended,
And the high arch, gliding through,
To the roof ascended,—

Then lay sore at my heart's door
Thoughts of her departed—
At the bitter words, 'No more,'
Tears of sorrow started :

Then, ah ! then the blue-ey'd Sprite,
And her winsome feigning,
Being fled—fled laughter light—
Frolic chang'd to plaining !

Fairy of the snowy weeds,
And the azure cincture,
Hadst thou of red Foxglove seeds
Seeth'd a magic tincture,

As 'tis said thy folk of old
Made for eyes of mortals,
Wherewith touch'd they might behold
Of your world the portals :

Hadst thou in the mid-earth been,
Felt the earthquakes heaving,
And the fatal Sisters seen
At their endless weaving :

Heard the sad tale that, once told,
Maketh dumb for pity—
Read the secrets of the old
Hundred-gated city :

Look'd upon the Sybil's page,
Ere the flame she lighted,
And beheld Medea's rage,
By false Jason slighted :

Heard by night fell Circe raise
Magic songs of feigning,
Threaded through the Cretan maze,
Its black centre gaining ;

Nothing could thy lore avail
To the utmost lavish'd ;
And thy magic arts must fail,
To restore the Ravish'd !

Yet—to gaze on her again
(As my tale hath taught thee),
Potent Fairy, I am fain,
Therefore have I sought thee—

Through the forest, through the lea,
Through the tangled wild-wood,
For I know she dwells with thee,
And her name is—CHILDHOOD !

So she ceas'd ! Our little sister,
Wond'ring, look'd her in the face,
As her own she lifted up, and kiss'd her ;
Then resum'd her state with childish grace ;
Said more gravely than the case might merit—
' No, she ne'er had seen the little Spirit :
Never ! never ! ' thus did she aver,
' Came that fairy Sprite to dwell with her ! '

All her play-time (mournful saying !)
She was left to sport alone,
For the very bees were gone a-Maying,—
The green linnets from the nest were flown.
' So in my old castles and my bower,
Each by turn, I live, and tend a flower,
Such as in the ' talking forest ' grew,
Which I water with enchanted dew ! '

' The grass walks are my dominions—
Moats to keep my foes away ;
But that little Sprite, with downy pinions,
Flutter'd ne'er across with me to play.'
This she utter'd, as if half forgetful
That it was but fabling :—or regretful
So to think :—then said, and clear'd her brow
' I will hear the elder Princess now.'

Then I answer'd—' My condition,
 Potent Fairy, you mis-state,
 I no Princess am, though by permission
 Of your grace, a rede I will relate—
 Errant Minstrel, oft in minstrel fashion
 Sing I songs of warfare, love and passion,
 But you see, no glitt'ring crown I bear
 Such as true Princesses always wear.

' Come back,—days of ancient glory,
 Toilsome strife, then listless ease—
 Feudal forests mingle with my story,
 The deep rushing noise of wind-rock'd trees.
 If my rhymes be rude, the clang of armour
 Takes their sweetness from them, Fairy charmer !
 Sway the sceptre well, and list my lays,
 I will tell a tale of ancient days.

I

A gentle Maiden walk'd alone within the deep green
 wood,
 And there she spied a fair white dove by savage hawks
 pursued ;
 ' Now come to me, thou hunted dove,' the gentle maiden
 said,
 ' And find a shelter in my arms, to hide thy beauteous
 head.'

The yellow belted bee

Was at work beneath the tree,

And the woodruffe nodded lightly on the bed !

Then spake the Prince, where low he lay beneath the
 beechen tree,

' The maid that fain would save a bird will surely
 succour me.'

He slowly turn'd his fainting limbs, and spake with
 mickle pain,

And from his wounds the crimson blood came welling
 forth amain.

And the cuckoo's note was clear,

With the belling of the deer,

And the cushats sang their madrigals again.

' Oh ! for thy gentle pity's sake, I pray thee to me bring
A draught to quench my raging thirst from yonder
forest spring—

For truly I was here waylaid, and wounded, as ye see,
All by his treachery that is my deadly enemy ! '

In the castle far away
Shone the mellow evening ray,
And the milky corn was green upon the lea.

She brought him water from the burn, and held it to
his lips,

She led him down to the hollow tree that in the deep
well dips ;

She hied her away to her forest-home, and brought of
her wheaten bread,

She spread him a couch of the tufted heath, to pillow
his weary head.

In the twilight beetles flew
Up against him—and the dew
Dimm'd the stars that watch'd by night above his bed.

' Now who be ye, so rudely lodg'd, with face so fair and
mild ? '

' My father is ranger of all the wild wood, and I am his
only child ! '

She tended him so patiently, ten summer weeks and
three,

Till the leaves were thick beneath her feet, when she
came to the beechen tree.

By the castle far away
Did the lifted banner play,
And the russet corn was ripe upon the lea !

' Now heed me well, thou luckless youth—so hie thee
hence away,

The hunters will come when the leaves are down, and
peril 'twere to stay.

I have but got one silver crown, my father gave it me—
And half I'll keep to be my own, and half I'll give to
thee ! '

And the shallow trickling burn
Wander'd on beneath the fern,
And the leaves they made a murmur like the sea !

Then up he rose on a harvest night, in moonlight broad
and clear,
While the mushroom sprung from the cold damp earth
in forest pathways drear :
' O Maid, this voice to faltering takes, a-praising of thy
care,
This heart can only leave behind a blessing and a prayer.'
There was mourning far away,
In the castle stern and grey,
And a bitter sound of wailing and despair.

Red berries on the thorn were ripe, and glisten'd wet
with dew,
Young lev'rets chas'd the falling leaves that down the
hollows flew ;
The hay and the clover were not cut when low on the
earth lay he,
When he hied him away, the hazel nut was dropping
from the tree !
And the autumn wind's low strain,
Sighing up through my refrain,
Mourn'd the dreary days of winter yet to be !

II

The prayers were said, the grave was made, the mourners
wept the dead,
But where was the prince to wear the crown, and reign
in his father's stead ?
When the requiem notes down the long aisle swept,
when the singer's voices were clear,
There came a mourner with bended brow, and stood by
the stately bier !
Why so pale, my Ladye Queen ?
' Ah ! ' she saith, ' the blows were keen,
From the son of my dead lord is naught to fear ! '

' And who be ye ? ' quoth the Barons bold,—' this
foremost place to win ?
For none may stand at the king's right hand, but he
that is next of kin ! '

He lifts his beaver—a welcome runs through the crowds
that round him kneel,
A long low murmur that mingles well with the prayer
for the dead man's weal.

Wherefore shrink, thou fair stepdame ?

Little dreameth he *her* name,

Who with jewell'd fingers brib'd the dastard steel !

' To-morrow's sun,' quoth the knights, ' at eve shall
light thy crowning day,

But where from thy father's alter'd face didst hide so
long away ? '

Short answer then made the princely youth—to priest
and peer spake he,—

' The quarry shelters in forest-brakes, and I trow they
might shelter me !

Didst *thou* tell the false, false tale,

That made love, fair queen, to fail ?

Did *they* part, who never met again—through thee ?

In the Minster aisle, at dark midnight, they mourn'd the
old king dead ;

They set the crown, at noonday bright, upon the young
king's head !

' Harken to me, my page,' quoth he, ' take horse
without delay,

Fly to the forest wherein I was hid, and speed as best
you may.'

With a wine cup in thy hand,

Why, O widow'd queen, dost stand ?

Is it deadly ?—wherefore cry, ' alas, the day ? '

' There shalt thou find in the deep, deep wood, a maiden
fair to see,

I charge thee, by the crown I bear on my head, to bring
that maid to me ! '

On his courser good fast sped the page, adown the forest
dell,

Till he spied a maid, set in flick'ring shade, at the brink
of the forest well !

O she lifted up her face

With a bashful woodland grace,

As at sight of her he lighted from the selle.

‘ And I greet thee well,’ the young page said, ‘ for certes
thou art she—

And thou must come with me, fair maid,—the prince
hath sent for thee.’

Fair Edla blush’d in gath’ring fear and wonder at that
rede,

‘ Young sir,’ quoth she, ‘ the prince I ne’er have seen in
truth and deed.’

Saith he, kneeling on his knee,

‘ Yet thou needst must come with me.’

And she weeping, he up-rai’d her on his steed.

So fast he sped, and led the maid within the castle hall,
And much she blush’d the guests to see, and lords and
ladies all.

‘ How fair she is,’ quoth the Barons brave : ‘ in sooth the
fairest here,

Though never a pearl her bosom deck, nor robe of
minivere.’

In the castle old and grey

How the merry minstrels play !

Yet from either eye she drops a glistening tear.

Sweet Edla sigh’d, sweet Edla wept, and knelt upon her
knee,

And the high dames wonder’d her beauty bright and
trembling mood to see :

When as she knelt before the prince, she rais’d not her
drooping eyes—

O had she done, I wot it would have wrought her much
surprise.

Through the many-tinted glass

Doth a narrow sunbeam pass,

Like a rainbow on her golden hair it lies.

‘ O come to me, thou hunted dove,’ the new-made
monarch said,

‘ And find a shelter in my arms, to hide thy beauteous
head :

And since thou once didst share thine all, a silver crown
with me,

I fain would share—’tis all I have,—a golden one with
thee ! ’

Through the forest far away
How the wild wind swept that day,
And the yellow leaves they danc'd beneath the tree.

'Is that all?' our little sister
Throned in her nest, replied;
Like an echo still methinks I list her
Baby accents, though division wide
Parts us from that garden—Railway thunder,
Rushing engines rave the tall trees under,
And the grass is trampled now, and brown,
And the Elms are dead—the Sumachs down!

DEPARTING

We were twins, and orphans too,
And side by side we play'd—
Our pleasures for ourselves we made,
And truly they were few.
They who gave us clothes and meat,
Alas! no love bestow'd,
Thus ours for each other flow'd,
A narrow stream, but sweet!

As double stars reveal'd by night
Seem a far distant sun,
So closely join'd their mingled light,
On earth they are but one—
And none can say—'here this doth end,
Or here the next begins,'—
So did our mingled spirits blend,
Our double souls were twins.

They said that there was gold to get
Beyond the restless sea,
And while we were but children yet,
They parted thee and me.
They talk'd of life but just begun,
Of wealth and merchant's gain,—
And we, in soul who were but one,
For this they made us twain.

We gaz'd into each other's eyes,
 But not a tear we shed :
 Touch'd with a cruel, chill surprise,
 Our hearts were dry and dead.
 A look half frighten'd, half forlorn,
 Her troubled eyes express'd ;
 She took the ribbon she had worn,
 And hid it in my breast.

A pledge of love, that simple dower,
 So frail is left me yet ;
 Perhaps in that last bitter hour
 She thought I might forget.
 She stood among the grass and sedge,
 The light waves touch'd her feet,
 The boat came to the water's edge,
 I turn'd thine eyes to meet,
 And give thee one last kiss, my sweet
 Katharina !

RETURNING

DOVES were cooing on the thatch,
 And, as I onward press'd,
 I found a little mossy nest
 Built on the wooden latch.
 Woodbines twin'd the window o'er,
 And on its rustic frame
 I saw the letters of her name
 That I carv'd long before.

I look'd within—she was not there
 The narrow room to grace—
 Her wheel was silent, and her chair
 Stood empty in its place.
 I wonder'd why thou didst not meet
 Thy wand'rer on his way :—
 But daisies in the grass were sweet
 Above thy head that day.

Thy love was like a linked chain
That reach'd across the sea,
But snapt asunder, when I fain
Had drawn its end to me :—
A sunbeam that at distance cheer'd
That cold and dreary shore,
But faded as my footsteps near'd
The threshold of thy door !
Asleep, asleep, then take thy rest,
And since it needs must be,
'Tis well it troubleth not thy breast,
That all is lost to me.
Yes ! *all* is lost, for who can tell
How chang'd are moor and lake,
For truly, though I lov'd them well,
'Twas only for thy sake.
And what to me is English air,
Or this mild autumn sun,
Since the twin spirit is not there ?
Here am I still undone,
For in the world I had but one

Katharina !

THE INDIAN CHIEF

The following circumstance is said to have taken place at the commencement of the American War :—

A Red Indian, having found a young English officer wounded in the forest, took care of him and adopted him for his own. Afterwards finding, that though hopeless of return, the young man's thoughts were always with his father, he undertook a long and dangerous journey through the forest, following in the track of the retreating British troops ; and having brought his young charge to within sight of their tents, took leave of him as related below.

I

SON of the Stranger ! hear my voice, eight moons their
light have shed,
Since in the chase I found thy trail, and follow'd where
it led :
I saw thee wounded on the earth with none to tend thee
nigh,
Where on a fallen tree thy head thou hadst laid down
to die !

II

I found thee, e'er the tender grass had sprouted in the
field,
When chesnut leaves lay folded yet, each in its crimson
shield :
And now the Sumach rob'd in red flaunts in the autumn
sun,
And yellow leaves upon the lake float by us one by one.

III

If the chill night had sooner clos'd, or I had come too
late,
The pining wind through naked boughs alone had wail'd
thy fate :
And when the tardy leaves at length came forth to deck
the place,
Then carrion birds had lighted down on thy uncover'd
face.

IV

Son of the Stranger ! 'tis enough—the Red man boasteth
not,
Far hast thou wander'd with my tribe, like ours has
been thy lot.
Through the green spring thy languid foot was ever at
my side,
As strength return'd, we chas'd the deer through all the
summer tide.

V

O sure of hand, I lov'd thee well—I love thee yet the
same,
I envied not thy rifle's shot that never miss'd its aim :
'Twas not for this that through the wood, so far thy
steps I led,
Where matted leaves shut out this sun that shineth
over-head.

VI

'Twas not because my people said—' When was a white
man true ! '
For well thy friendship I had prov'd, and well thy faith
I knew ;

But that I saw that thou wert sad, when the Red chiefs
were gay,
For thinking of thy father's tent a thousand miles away.

VII

Hear me !—In happier seasons past I had a warrior son,
But now he hunts in other fields, and I must dwell alone :
For thou whose presence on my grief a soft'ning veil
had flung,
Thou dost not choose the Red man's life, nor love the
Red man's tongue.

VIII

When the round moon at dead of night shines on the
frozen snow,
My warrior leaves his spirit-home and seeks his place
below :
In troubled dreams I hear the sound of restless footsteps
nigh :
Idly they wander round my tent—faintly in distance die.

IX

I start from slumber when I hear that sound remem-
ber'd well,
But, ah ! his spirit-footsteps leave no traces where they
fell :
No trail upon the yielding snow that lies all smoothly
fair :
I fain would follow—he hath fled ! Ask of the night
winds where.

X

Now when the sun shines warm and bright, I rise at
dawn of day,
When birds rejoice, and tender flowers bask in his
cheering ray :
But not the voice of singing birds to Me can gladness
bring,
When snow hath melted from the earth, and leaves
break forth in spring.

XI

Lift up thine eyes across the lake, and scan the woods
that lie,
Heaving their rounded bulk to meet the pure transparent sky :
Look well—to them the setting sun his brightest hues
hath lent,
And yonder is thy people's camp, and there thy father's
tent.

XII

Perhaps thy warriors round their fire but seldom talk
of thee,
And think not, coming through the wood thy long-lost
form to see :
Another now thy place may fill, and in the red field
shine,
Thy dog have learn'd to take his food from other hands
than thine.

XIII

But there is One who coldly looks at yon departing sun,
Who deems all beauty lost to earth, since thou, young
Chief, art gone :
Can find no balsam in the woods, though far his foot
may roam,
To heal the pain that in his heart hath made itself
a home.

XIV

What though with visions of thy face thy Father's sleep
is sweet,
When morning dreams bring back the sound of thy
returning feet :
Alas ! for hope, when he awakes, to find them all depart,
Delusive echoes of the note that vibrates in his heart.

XV

Go—dry those tears the pale-fac'd chief hath not
disdain'd to shed,
And let him lay his hand again in blessing on thy head :
Go—that *his* heart may yet rejoice when birds at
morning sing,
When snow hath melted from the earth, and leaves
break forth in spring.

THE MINSTREL'S CURSE

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF LUDWIG UHLAND

IN olden times a castle uprais'd its front of pride,
 Seen far across the country, e'en to the ocean's side :
 A garden bloom'd around it, a perfum'd garland bright,
 Wherein sprang silver fountains in glitt'ring sheets of
 light.

There, rich in lands and conquests, once reign'd, in
 haughty state,
 A king on whose dark forehead were rul'd the lines of
 hate ;
 And what he thought was fury, and what he look'd
 a blow,
 And what he spoke was scourging, and what he wrote
 was woe.

Once to this castle journey'd an honour'd minstrel pair,
 The one with golden ringlets, the other white of hair ;
 And with his harp the old man sat on the barbed steed,
 Which, lightly by him walking, did his young comrade
 lead.

Spake the elder to the younger—' Be well prepar'd,
 my son,
 Think on thy sweetest ballads, sing with thy richest
 tone :
 For pleasing and for paining, try all thy deepest art,
 For it to-day behoves us to move the king's hard heart.'

Already the two minstrels in those high halls are seen,
 On his throne sits the monarch, and at his side the
 queen :
 The king in fearful glory, like fiery Northern Lights,
 And mild the queen beside him as moon of summer
 nights.

He strikes his harp, the minstrel—he strikes it wond'rous
well,
That richer, ever richer, the echoing measures swell :
Then forth with heav'n-like sweetness the youth's clear
voice out floats,
Pure as if choral spirits were mingling in the notes.

They sing of love and springtide, the golden age of youth,
Of holiness and freedom, of manhood's worth and truth :
Sing of each sweet emotion through human heart that
strays,
Sing of each lofty passion that human heart can raise.

The circling crowd of courtiers forebore the scornful
jest,
Some thought of grace unwonted surpris'd each warrior's
breast :
The queen drew forth, impassion'd with grief and joy
so sweet,
The rose-bud from her bosom, and threw it to his feet.

The king cried out in fury, and shook with passion's
strife—
' Your spells seduc'd my people—and dare they touch
my wife ? '
He seiz'd his sword and hurl'd it against the stripling's
side,
In lieu of song the life-blood stream'd forth, a ruddy tide.

As by a tempest scatter'd, the list'ners backward press'd,
The youth breath'd out his spirit upon his master's
breast :
He flung his mantle round him, upright in dreary state,
Upon his horse he set him, and left with him the gate.

But back towards the portal he turn'd, that minstrel
grey,
He seiz'd his harp whose echoes had scarcely died away :
Against a marble column the priceless shell he flung,
Then cried, till through the castle his fearful warning
rung—

‘Woe unto you, proud portals, no more shall tuneful
string
Sound sweetly through those chambers, nor minstrel in
them sing,
No sounds be there but mourning, while clanging feet
shall fly,
Till crush’d by vengeful spirits in ruin’d heaps they lie !—

‘Woe to thee, perfum’d garden, fair in the light of May—
Here by this face death-pallid, I swear to thee to-day
That for this cause must vanish thy fountain’s ceaseless
flow,
And thee a stony desert shall future seasons know.

‘Woe to thee, vile assassin ! Accursèd be thy name,
In vain is all thy striving for crowns of bloody fame :
Thy name shall be forgotten, in endless darkness veil’d,
Be like the last death-rattle, to empty night exhal’d !’—

This hath the minstrel spoken—and this the heavens
have heard,
The walls lie low, the pillars fall ruin’d at his word :
To tell of vanish’d splendour one column decks the plain,
But sorely rent and shatter’d, it shall not long remain.

Where stood the blooming garden, lies waste deserted
land,
For there no tree drops shadow, no fount springs through
the sand :
The name of that king liveth in neither book nor verse,
All sunken, all forgotten—This was the Minstrel’s Curse !

II. SCRIPTURE POEMS

HANNAH

PART I

‘ I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit.’—1 Sam. i.

‘ Why weepest thou ?

WHY dwells that gloom upon thy gentle brow,
When here with clouds of fragrant incense rise

The morning and the evening sacrifice,
And God, our fathers’ God, accepts my vow ?

Why, in the shadow of His holy place,
Who so doth bless our race,
That from the highest Heav’n He doth descend
His gracious ear to lend,

That He doth stoop from the eternal hills 10
And their desire fulfils,

Who seek the curtain’d footstool of His throne ;
Is not His will made known ?

Go to His shrine and leave thy sorrow there,
The God of Israel waits to answer prayer.

The place is holy ground,
Angelic messengers its gates surround ;
But not upon their sinless wings are borne
The broken pleadings that from earth ascend,
The groans, the tears, the sighs— 20
Sighs of the oppress’d, complaints of the forlorn.

He who with manna once our fathers fed,
And through the wilderness their footsteps led
To this their promis’d land,

Did not, albeit their sins provok’d him sore,
His gracious presence from their tribes withdraw.
He trusts no angel hand

To take the blessings that from Heaven’s gate flow
And scatter them below—

No angel voice to be his delegate 30
And bring him tidings of his people’s state ;

Not to an angel's ear
 Doth He entrust man's feeble vows to hear.
 Hidden from mortal ken
 He heareth, shadowing the mercy-seat,
 The prayers that sorrow poureth at his feet,
 For his delights are with the sons of men.

' Immortal and invisible, He yet
 On the frail dust of earth His love hath set—
 Holy of Holies, he doth not despise 40
 The praises that from sinful voices rise—
Why weepest thou ?

In spring the stream that pours down bursting tides
 In summer gently glides ;
 But my love in a changeless current runs—
 Am not I better to thee than ten sons ?
Why weepest thou ?

' By night I slept and in my dream Peninnah me did
 greet,
 Methought a clod of earth she held, and dropp'd it at
 my feet,
 And lo ! the clod of earth wax'd great, and spread
 from side to side, 50
 Till far it stretch'd beyond my view, a desert drear
 and wide.

Methought across its arid plains with restless foot
 I went,
 Nor wandering cloud nor frowning rock a welcome
 shadow lent ;
 Methought I knew not what I sought as still I onward
 hied,
 Nor why so long contented stray'd from thy beloved
 side.

' 'Twas but a dream, and yet the sun beat down with
 scorching ray,
 The earth was hot beneath my feet, I could not get
 away ;
 When suddenly a stately tree from out the desert grew,
 And spread abroad its branches light, its green leaves
 wet with dew.

‘ A stately tree, and while I gaz’d with wonder and
surprise, 60
A fountain bubbling from the earth sprang up before
mine eyes,
So near the trunk, that o’er its source the tree its
shadow flung,
And in the waters clear and cold its verdant branches
hung.

‘ Hard by the widely spreading roots that little fountain
stray’d,
As fain to linger near the tree for which alone it play’d ;
Then wand’ring forth I watch’d its course that glitter’d
in the light,
’Till, swallow’d by the treach’rous sand, it vanish’d from
my sight.

‘ No waving reed nor desert herb its barren margin
grac’d,
Across the bare and thankless plain its waters ran to
waste ;
The sheltering tree that o’er it droop’d drank of the
flowing tide, 70
No sapling rising from its root the lonely rill supplied.

‘ I woke, the tears were on my cheek : the tinkling of
the rill,
The wind’s low murmur in the tree, methought I heard
them still :
Alas ! the lightning’s stroke at length must lay the
proud tree low,
Would that the little fount might then for ever cease
to flow !

‘ Thou art that lofty branching tree, for strength and
beauty made,
And I the rill that had its source beneath the spreading
shade ;
Fresh from the well-spring of my heart it bounds, a
silvery tide,
That fain would still reflect thy face and linger at
thy side.

‘ O sheltering tree, with goodly boughs, beneath whose
shade I live, 80

I weep because no other pledge of love I have to give.
No tender saplings I have rear’d to flourish in thy stead,
When thou laid prostrate in the vale shalt bow thy
lofty head.

‘ Thou didst behold my friendless youth and draw me
to thy heart,

Thou hast a father’s loss supplied, and done a brother’s
part :

Thou didst the orphan’d maiden’s cup e’en to o’er-
flowing fill,

The childless wife from thee receives a goodly portion
still !

‘ I love thee, yet no gift can bring to offer at thy shrine,
If fain I would some portion yield, all that I have is
thine.

For me thou dost arise betimes and pay thy vows to
Heaven— 90

All this and more I have receiv’d, but nothing have
I given !

‘ No blooming babe with artless tongue I to thine arms
can bring,

I have not got that best of gifts to be mine offering.

She does not love thee more than I, whose children
climb thy knee—

Oh, that my father’s God would grant that long’d-for
gift to me !

‘ Peninnah’s daughters in her room shall rise, her name
to bless,

Her children’s children round her cling, to crave her
proud caress.

Peninnah’s sons upon her tomb shall shed their filial
tears,

Her honour’d name shall live with thine, through all
succeeding years.

‘ But I the history of my love must unrecorded leave—
 When my place knoweth me no more, who shall remain
 to grieve ? 101
 No future times shall link with thine my life, my hopes,
 my fears,
 And they who see my tomb shall give no sighs, no love,
 no tears.’

‘ *Why weepest thou ?* ’

Those low words sooth’d her, as she went to bow
 With thoughtful spirit at the holy place,
 And sunset clouds reflected in her face
 Their own bright hue. She thought upon her vow,
 And a faint hope into her heart did stray,
 That He who bids men pray, 110
 Would not unheeded leave her humble cry,
 Vouchsafing no reply.
 By purple veil, by crimson canopy,
 Meekly she bent her knee,
 Pouring her soul out till the glow of day
 Melted to dusk away,
 And lighted lamps God’s hallow’d place display’d,
 To her who at its outmost portals pray’d.

‘ Holy of Holies, veil’d in light too pure for mortal eyes,
 Before whose throne doth Israel’s prayer like fragrant
 incense rise, 120
 I know thy mighty actions past and all thy book foretells,
 And fear to come too near the place wherein thine
 honour dwells !

God, who from lofty Lebanon dost melt the winter
 snows,
 Who mak’st the barren wilderness to blossom as the rose,
 Who from the smitten rock didst pour floods on the
 desert sand,
 And cause the clouds to rain down food on an unfruitful
 land—

‘ Is anything too hard for Thee, that mortal lips can
 crave ?
 Thou who to childless Sarah erst our father Isaac gave,

I know without thy high behest on earth is nothing done :
Since life and death are in thy hand—Oh ! give to
me a son ! 130

‘ Thou art acquainted with my ways, far off as well
as near ;
And her reproaches who hath caus’d my sorrow, thou
dost hear :
Thou mark’st the windings of my path, each step my
foot hath trod,
Wilt thou not look upon my tears ? O God ! my father’s
God !

‘ I know that when Messias comes for whom the nations
wait,
The Prince whose sceptre shall prevail to raise our
fallen state—
He shall for all the sons of men a perfect offering make,
I pray thee then accept my vow for thine Anointed’s
sake.

‘ If on my grief thou wilt indeed look down with pitying
eye,
And grant the boon my spirit craves, the long’d-for gift
supply : 140
Soon as the child can lisp thy praise, thy glorious name
adore,
I will return him, in thy courts to serve for evermore.

‘ Him from my bosom I will spare, will rear him for thy
shrine,
Contented soon to give him up and feel that he is thine,
Myself will teach him that with thee ’tis better to abide,
Will wean his love away from me and lead him from
my side.

‘ If, when in future years I come to seek thy holy place,
He should unconscious turn away, forgetful of my face ;
And ne’er return the tender love that must surround
him still,
I will not murmur nor complain—only, my prayer
fulfil ! ’ 150

' Why weepest thou ? '

In different tones the words were utter'd now
 To those that on her meek attentive ear
 Her husband pour'd to dry her starting tear,
 Striving her suffering spirit to endow
 With the calm thoughts that in his tranquil breast
 Had taken up their rest :
 Nor like *His* voice who in the garden spoke,
 When on his empty tomb the day-light broke,
 Where Mary wept in loneliness of soul, 160
 'Till to her heart his pitying accents stole,
 Chasing away the anguish from her brow
 With his lov'd words, *' Woman, why weepest thou ? '*

Reproachfully they fell,
 Those cold harsh tones, and scarcely could she tell
 What they might mean, so startlingly that came
 To check her pleadings and her tears to blame—
' Why weepest thou before the holy shrine ?
Put far from thee thy wine :
Wilt thou the temple of thy God profane ? 170
Go, seek thy home again :
May His insulted love who dwells within,
Forgive thee this thy sin.'

Meekly she answer'd him ;
 For in the clear thin twilight, soft yet dim,
 She mark'd the priestly garb, the silver hair ;
 And rising from her prayer,
 Parted the dark locks that upon her face
 Had fallen like a veil. 'Twas strange disgrace
 That such suspicion on her head should rest, 180
 Troubling her modest breast.

' Let not my lord mistake,
Chide not thine handmaid for her weeping's sake ;
I am a woman sorrowful in heart,
Unwilling from the holy shrine to part ;
In the abundance of my bitter grief
Here did I seek relief—
And in the silence that His walls afford,
Have poured out my soul before the Lord.'

And he said ' Go in peace,
 Thy father's God grant thee a full release,
 Bless thee according to His bounteous will,
 And thy request fulfil.' 190

HANNAH

PART II

' My heart rejoiceth in the Lord.'—1 Sam. ii. 1.

THE daylight broke,
 The child was sleeping, but the mother woke ;
 Then darkness fled, and, trembling still afar,
 Hung in the ruddy east the morning star ;
 A fleeting thing, of midnight hours that spoke,
 One of her gems that Night had left behind,
 When, restless like the wind,
 Spreading her dusky wings she fled away,
 Shunning the face of day,
 And cowering sunk beyond the reach of dawn, 10
 On western plains forlorn.

The sky grew brighter and the Temple hymn,
 Begun in twilight dim,
 Still softly echo'd in the balmy air,
 When the first sunbeam touch'd the house of prayer
 The morning star shrunk in,
 Lost in the light, with all its radiant kin.
 But few had mark'd it in the glowing skies :—
 To toil or pleasure risen, the busy throng
 Crowding the narrow pathways press'd along— 20
 The blessed sun was welcome to their eyes
 New wak'd, and thoughtful for their daily lot,
 They dwelt no more on blessings needed not
 To crown their opening day—
 Of peaceful rest did no glad record keep,
 But let remembrance of their quiet sleep
 Fade with the star away.

But *she* beheld, that watcher calm and mild
 Beside her sleeping child—
 She saw it sink into the glowing sky ; 30
 And still he woke not—though the time drew nigh,

The time to give him up—her first-born son—
 The darling of her heart—her only one.
 Yet 'twas for this she sought him, when with tears
 She came in other years,
 With trembling heart by long reproaches worn,
 And fears conflicting torn—
 Yet 'twas for this she rear'd him—this delay'd
 Her yearly offering, erst in Shiloh paid ;
 And now rejoicing, to its portals bound, 40
 She brought the blessing that her prayer had crown'd.
 Her hope fulfill'd—her promise unforgot,
 She came and linger'd not.
 The level sunbeams lighted on the place
 Where still he slumber'd in his child-like grace ;
 She came and laid her hand upon his head,
 And softly thus she said :—

' Sleep on while yet beside thy couch her watch thy
 mother keeps,
 There is a Guardian of thy rest, who slumbers not nor
 sleeps—
 Sleep on, though morning's early light across thy curtain
 beams, 50
 Thy mother's voice perhaps no more shall mingle with
 thy dreams.

' I would within thy child-like heart there yet might rest
 a trace
 Of distant fields, of early home, and of thy father's face ;
 And loving thoughts of me, my son, might ever there
 remain
 Among the few things left of earth, that it might yet
 retain.

' But if such thoughts might wean thy heart from Him
 thou serv'st above,
 Ah ! then forget thy father's face, forget thy mother's
 love ;
 Forget Mount Ephraim's hoary head, where mists and
 vapours meet,
 Forget his forest-cumber'd heights and vineyard-
 trellis'd feet.

' As birds their helpless offspring tend with never-
wearied care, 60
Search for their sake the gloomy woods and skim the
pathless air ;
And then, their spreading pinions grown, deserting, give
them o'er,
Forsaken, through the upper fields alone to sing and
soar—

' So have I tended thee—but now my work of love is
done,
And I must leave thee to *His* care who feedeth *them*,
my son.
I must forsake, though not forget—to thee 'tis given
to rise
Now, like the birds, desert thy nest, and seek thy
kindred skies.

' What though forgetfulness should come, to blot me
from thy breast,
In spirit still thy mother's hand upon thy head may rest.
Lift up thy heart to thy true home, thy Father's house
above, 70
Thou that art mine no more to keep, but still my own
to love ! '

Among the gathering throng
With the new-waken'd child they pass'd along ;
Soon at the shrine of God, in faith drawn near,
With offering and oblation to appear.
The parting hour the father's heart oppress'd,
But peace had visited the mother's breast.
With loving eyes that wander'd o'er his face,
Gently she led him to the Holy place,
And brought him where, the daily offering made, 80
The aged priest before the altar stay'd.
Meekly and quietly her tale she told :
' Let thy soul live !—Behold !
I am the woman that stood by thee here,
And pray'd—my God to me bow'd down his ear.
Here I my prayer and my petition made,
And for this child I pray'd.

‘ My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, who doth exalt my head,
My mouth is fill’d with praise, and low in dust my foes
are laid ;

In thy salvation I rejoice, thy holy works I see, 90
Beside thee there is none, O God ! nor any rock like
thee.

‘ Thou only refuge in despair, and succour in distress,
To thee with earnest thanks I come thy faithful name
to bless ;

O let the offering of my hand be pleasant in thine eyes ;
Thou God who didst receive my vow, accept my sacrifice.

‘ Father, I bring thee back thine own, and here forgive-
ness crave,

If once thy gift had well-nigh won my heart from thee
who gave.

O let such wish be mine no more to keep the child awhile,
To keep him from his Father’s courts, and from his
Father’s smile.

‘ O, hope of Israel ! what is this that like a dream doth
rise, 100

This vision faintly shadow’d forth that floats before
mine eyes ;

Sing in your spheres, ye sons of God,—thou earth, arise
and shine,

A woman to these courts shall bring a greater gift than
mine !

‘ My son, for whom with bitter tears I wept and wrestled
long,

I leave thee, record of my vow, and witness of my song ;
Through life, for thee, by prayer obtain’d, I’ll lift my
voice in praise ;

Walk thou in all thy Father’s laws, and love his holy
ways.

‘ For thou wilt need no mother’s care, nor mother’s fond
caress,

The God who gave thee, will protect—who takes thee
back, will bless.

Now on the threshold of thy home thine infant foot hath
 trod, 110
 I bring thee where I sought thee first—I leave thee with
 thy God ! ’

So did she sing—now lost and past away
 Is the pure shrine to which she came to pray ;
 Now from its courts no songs of praise ascend,
 Nor tribes of worshippers towards it tend.
 God ! who once dwelt with man on Shiloh’s plain,
 When wilt thou raise it from the dust again ?
 That song of praise no echo finds below—

Sad tears of sorrow flow
 From them who worship there, who wail and fast, 120
 Weeping and mourning for its glory past.

But in a purer temple rear’d afar
 Beyond the morning star,
 A place prepar’d, the glory of all lands—
 A house not made with hands—
 Is mingling sweetly with their sacred mirth
 The song of triumph *she* began on earth,
 When first her God upon her sorrow smil’d :
 Its notes are echoed on that peaceful shore,
 Where long ago they met to part no more, 130
 The mother and her child.

THE DEATH OF MOSES ON MOUNT NEBO

AND Moses was alone : his foot had pass’d
 For ever from the haunts of men, his eyes
 Had look’d their last upon the tented plain !

The mountain battlements, its ribs of stone
 Were round about him, the eternal rocks
 Savage and wild rear’d up their barren spires,
 And shrouding vapours, like a billowy main,
 Heav’d their dim masses up against his seat,
 And hid the warm earth from his yearning soul.
 Unheard of him the voice of weeping rose 10
 From the forsaken multitude—unseen

Amid the sunbeams far beneath his feet
 Hung in a floating veil of fragrance pure
 The incense of the evening sacrifice !

He sat alone : and he said, ' Here am I—
 Lord God of Israel, on the mountain hoar,
 Shut out from sight and from communion sweet
 With them that are my fellows—I am come
 To meet with Thee, Invisible ! sustain
 Death all unveil'd to thought, by passion dimm'd 20
 Or slow decay, or lengthen'd pilgrimage.
 O Thou Eternal ! How shall I sustain
 Thy terrors manifold, Thy voice endure,
 Uncloth'd upon, unshelter'd by this frame ?
 How shall I see Thy face, nor fall away,
 Appall'd with light, beyond the utmost star,
 And shrink into the nothing whence I came ?

' Yet, if Thou wilt be gracious, if Thine ear
 Is to my voice attent, and if my soul
 Be written in Thy Book,—by all Thy care, 30
 The cloudy pillar, whereby Thou didst guide
 Thy people journeying through this wilderness—
 By the dropp'd manna round about their tents,
 And by the smitten rock—nay, more—by all,
 Favour laid up for cycles unreveal'd,
 Wrapp'd in the dusk of yet unfolded Time—
 Give me this token—breathe away these clouds
 Which hide the green earth's bosom ; let me see
 Blue Jordan wind,—on his desired shores
 Behold the land forbidden to my foot, 40
 The glorious land where Thou wilt set Thy Name,
 The heritage of Israel ! '

Then arose
 The slumb'ring breeze, and pin'd among the caves
 And hollows of the rock—then swept the sea
 Of floating vapours upward, till display'd,
 As by the rending of a snow-white veil,
 The smiling land beneath them lay reveal'd :
 Green, silent, glowing in the sunset gleams
 It spread into the distance, waving fields
 And valleys yellow with the ripening corn, 50

And vineyards on the hills, and forests thick
 The mountain sides ascending. Farther yet
 Stretch'd the wide landscape—to the swelling ridge
 Of Lebanon with all its cedars crown'd,
 To plains Sidonian and the Tyrian shore,
 To the blue borders of the utmost sea.

And Moses saw with eyes undimm'd—beheld
 The winding river, near whose rushy marge
 The tribes by number lay,—with morning dawn
 To cross the tide :—And from his heart a pray'r 60
 Ascended for their weal ;—for he had known
 Their weakness,—he had pleaded for them long,
 And in his spirit echoed still the sound
 Of mourning, that grew fainter and more faint,
 As up the mountain side that day he came,
 Knowing his hands which he had lifted up,
 For evermore had ceas'd from blessing Israel.

The Prophet gaz'd—but not with earthly eyes
 Alone, though earthly eyes of age undimm'd
 Receiv'd the wondrous vision—to his soul 70
 Futurity came forth, and lent her hues,
 Her glories and her unimagi'd woes,
 To the far-spreading plains and swelling hills.

And Moses saw upon the lofty rocks
 Of Zion a fair city rise and lift
 Her pinnacles and domes : around them drawn
 Towers of defence, and battlements of pride :
 And he beheld—till in her midst arose
 The temple of the Lord—its golden gates—
 Those walls whereon no tool was lifted up, 80
 Its portals fill'd with waiting multitudes
 He saw—and with its glory was content ;
 The cedar-roof—the vessels of pure gold—
 The Ark o'ershadow'd with mysterious wings—
 While in the courts without, for ever rose,
 With praise of ministering Levites sung,
 The smoke of victims slain, towards the skies.

And Moses said—' The Lord accept thy vows,
 Thou mighty nation, and increase thy stores.'

And he beheld again, and underneath 90
The Holy place, in darken'd chambers dim,
Stood symbols of unholy things, and names
Of unclean spirits—Isis, with the moon
Her shadowy crescent, on her forehead set,
Weeping her lost Osiris, and the sign
Of great Astarte, the Assyrian's queen,
And Hera with her silver snakes,—the names
Of all the hosts of Heaven—and nigh them burn'd
Offering of incense, and the priests of God
Stood, ev'ry man his censer in his hand. 100

And Moses bow'd his face upon his hands,
And sigh'd—' O Lord, forgive ! '—And he beheld
The riches of his nation—flocks and herds
Unnumber'd for their multitude, and corn
And wine and oil and precious woods and gold—
But as he look'd, behold they took thereof,
And fashion'd golden calves, and set them up,
And all the tribes went forth to worship them !

Then he beheld the Prophets going forth 110
With signs and wonders, yet they heeded not,
But multiplied their idols in the groves,
Crying, and stretching out their hands on high,
' O Baal, hear us ! '—And he lifted up
His voice, and wept. Again the vision wax'd
Distinct : encamp'd between the distant hills,
And from the mountain masses gathering,
Chariot and horseman and a mighty host
With gleaming spears, and flashing swords appear'd ;
Against the Holy City they came forth,
And as the changes of a dream, so came 120
Swift changes over it ; the goodly towers
Before them fell, the massy gates gave way,
Its glorious beauty was laid waste, its pride
Soil'd in the dust, its riches all despoil'd,
And alien hands from the most holy place
Tore down its carvèd work of cedar, laid
Rude hands upon its fretted gold, and bore
Its sacred vessels to a heathen shrine !

And Moses said—‘ Deliver them, O Lord,
For yet they are Thy people ! ’

Then there fell 130

A shadow over Canaan ;—indistinct
And dim the vision seem’d, with sighs confus’d
Of war, and trouble of contending tribes,
Of oracles forgotten, and of sins
Crying for vengeance !—The fair city stood
Fair as of old, on the eternal hills,
And from its sacred courts ascended still
Incense and off’ring :—but no longer hung
The cloud within its precincts, and the voice
That spake between the Cherubim was dumb. 140
Dimness hung over all, and disbelief
Spread brooding like a canopy, to shut
The sight of Heav’n, and steep the pray’rless crowd
In its unhallow’d air ;—there was a sound
Of scoffing, that spake coldly unprov’d—
‘ Where is the promise of His coming ?—Lo !
All things continue fix’d and bound of old ! ’

And Moses cried—‘ O lost and sunk too low
For thought to fathom—O cold worshippers—
O foolish nation, mockers vain, what care, 150
What remedy can reach to heal them now ? ’

And as he spake, ONE lifted up His voice,
And cried, till far and near the mountains shook—
The dimness fled away, ‘ Deliver them,
For I have found a ransom ! ’

After pause,

The Prophet lifted up his face, to look
Upon the dread Messiah, on the King
Of mighty Israel,—but behold, no king,
No conqueror went forth, no ruler sway’d
The sceptre of his people, but ONE stood 160
Upon a mountain, and they brought to Him
The lame, the maim’d, the blind, and on them laid
He holy hands, and they were whole. His face
Was calmer than th’ eternal vaulted sky,
His brow majestic, more than earthly soul
Of earth alone could stamp it, and His words

Pass'd human reach of tenderness ; He cried,
 And the green hills of Canaan echo'd long
 The love-begotten strain—' Come unto Me
 All ye that labour and are heavy-laden,
 And I will give you rest ! '

170

Most blessèd sound,
 And happy day, most favour'd company !
 So long he gaz'd, as one who once forlorn,
 Finds assur'd peace and safety without end !

Then the bless'd vision chang'd, and he beheld
 The God-Man under waving palm-boughs high
 Down-riding to Jerusalem, around,
 And in his train a countless multitude,
 Crying ' Hosanna ', and with garments rich,
 And leaves his pathway strewing, but no look 180
 Of triumph mark'd he on Messiah's face,
 But rather in the vision, wondrous pain
 His aspect dimm'd, a burd'ning weight of woe,
 And a foreshadow'd agony ; strange thoughts,
 Deep wond'ring, flash'd upon the Seer's soul
 With chill'd misgiving, but he cast away
 That pang, and cried ' What faithless questioning,
 Soul, hath beset thee ? as if He who comes
 To reign, could find usurpers on His throne,
 Or finding, could not hurl them with the strength 190
 Of His right hand, to outermost perdition—
 Should He, if haply could rebellion rise
 (Which yet methinks it could not)—should He reign
 The less, or suffer damage ? Nay ! His throne
 He shall establish, in the pleasant land
 He shall teach peace ! Methinks ev'n now a voice
 Speaketh within me thus : ' Thy throne, O God,
 Is, and shall be for ever,' God and Man,
 Vision most sure, though future, yet distinct,—
 Who shall be, and shall hear Hosannas glad— 200
 I pray Thee, in Thy day remember me,
 Though cover'd in the dust : nay, though my voice
 From dust Hosannas cannot cry, look back
 Into the past—behold ! upon this rock,
 I dying lift Hosannas to Thy name—
 Look back—and in the dust, remember me ! '

But while he spake, a deeper shadow fell
 Upon the hills of Canaan, and a veil
 Of dimness, greater than had e'er before
 Hung brooding on the city, compass'd it : 210
 Dark, dark the scene, and trembling seiz'd the soul
 Of him who gaz'd—confus'd and broken sounds,
 With intervals of horror and of fear,
 Came like accusing spirits to his seat,
 And ever and anon athwart the gloom,
 While the earth trembled and the stars went in,
 Flash'd momentary visions of One crown'd
 With thorns, and cover'd with a purple robe,
 Thus mockingly ador'd. So still he gaz'd
 Faint with a dying hope. He look'd, and lo ! 220
 In murky darkness hung the victim Christ,
 The Hope of Israel ! Hope vain now indeed
 And forfeit past redemption—look'd and saw
 His own, reviling, and the heathen's spear
 Wound his expiring frame !
 He died ! The Seer beheld, and bow'd his head,
 Crying ' Undone, undone ! ' The clouds came up
 Veiling the fields of Canaan—on the Mount
 They rose and shrouded Him in darkness deep
 And fearful, as the darkness of his soul ! 230

And he said, ' O my Nation, whom I led
 With painful steps athwart this wilderness,
 Whose gain of this green land hath made it light
 To me, no foot upon its fields to set—
 Is all then lost ? Yea, hast thou slain thy King ?
 Who now shall plead for pardon ? God, my God,
 Let me not die—or let this vision fade—
 Erase it from my soul that thus I saw
 Godhead dissever'd from Humanity !
 I know my sins were present at that deed, 240
 The tempter spirits cry it in mine ears :
 They rise, they witness ! O ! to die, to die,
 With this new guilt upon my spirit, spare—
 Yet wherefore spare ? nay, lift thy hand, and strike,
 For I have slain the Lord of Glory ! Strike !
 God, I submit, entreating not, I bare
 My forehead to the blow ! How didst thou die,

Messiah ! Prince ! Thou didst not cry nor strive.
 “ As a man falleth before wicked men,
 So fellest thou ! ” Alas ! this dimness grows, 250
 It covers me ! O Death, how dark thou art—
 O God, how far from me ! The clouds are round,
 Above, about me ! I am left alone !
 Egypt, thy days of darkness had a hope
 That made them lightsome, to this gloom compar'd !
 Eternal ! Whom I talk'd with face to face,
 Unconscious of this crime which blindeth hope—
 If from the deeps of blackness thou wilt hear,
 If there *be* hope in darkness to be felt—
 Here I beseech thee, as I once besought 260
 With mortal eyes thy glory to behold,
 Show me thy LOVE, O God, before I die !

‘ One transfigur'd ! In the cloud
 Wherefore dost thou stand,
 With a golden censer in thy hand ?
 Folded in his shroud,
 Saw I one like thee entombèd lie,
 Having breath'd out his soul in strife and agony !

‘ Who art thou, Lord ?
 On thy brow, as from the dead restor'd, 270
 Godhead and Manhood meet,
 Print of nails is on thy hands and feet—
 Who art thou, Lord ?
 I know thee not, yet dimly I divine,
 If one from death could rise,
 That thou art He !
 From beneath thy feet the thunders roll,
 Love immortal beameth from thine eyes,
 Foreshadow'd mercies shine
 In the glory that enshroudeth thee ! 280
 Art thou the LOVE of God ? and dost thou stand
 Lifting thy wounded hand,
 Interceding for my guilty soul ?
 Didst thou, tabernacled in this clay,
 Breathe upon the cross thy life away ?
 Then, of thy great fulness to me give—
 Let me, by thy dying, live !

' Love of God ! and dost thou not upbraid,
 Though the shadow of a thorny crown
 Doth never from thy forehead fade— 290
 Though for sin of man the awful frown
 Of wrath, on thee came down—
 Though among thine own betray'd,
 Dost thou live again, and intercede ?
 Then is not hope extinct—
 Since in brotherhood with manhood link'd
 Thou dost stand before the throne,
 Unoppress'd with splendour like thine own,
 Unamaz'd with light, before Him plead
 For Adam's fall'n seed ! 300
 Yea, I hear a voice within,
 Saying, " Know, O man, thy sin
 God's free bounty shall not countervail,
 Greater than their lost estate through Me shall mortals
 win :
 Be accusing spirits henceforth dumb,
 Minist'ring angels cry ' All hail ! '
 Lo, I come ! "

' Vision, ere thy day reveal'd,
 I see thy reign arise—
 Wond'rous Love ! I know thou wilt despise 310
 Shame and spitting, for the promise seal'd
 By the oath of Him who cannot lie,
 " Through thy death shall death and sorrow die ! "

Thou hast many crowns upon thy head,
 Greatly shall thy kingdom spread,
 Many waters flow beneath thy feet,
 At thy throne, O God, shall gath'ring nations meet.

' Longer needeth not delay—
 Love of God, take now my life away !
 I am ready ! let this breath 320
 Fade into desired death !
 Yea ! and those at my withdrawal weeping,
 Lo ! I leave them to thy keeping !
 Greater love thou hast than mine.
 Will their welfare, Love divine,

Overbear their sin, their spirits save,
 Let thy will upraise them from the grave,
 Let them waken to thy praise,
 Glorious from their slumber in the dust—
 Soul and body leave I to thy trust, 330
 Till the ending of the days !
 Nigh their tents the waves of Jordan swell,
 They shall cross the stream with dawning light—
 I shall be with Thee this night,
 And for both shall all be well !

‘ Comest Thou nearer ? yet more near ?
 Perfect love doth cast out fear !
 Draw my spirit with thy beck’ning hand,
 For mine eyes have seen thy promis’d land,
 From the weary clay my soul release— 340
 I would enter into peace ! ’

And Moses died. The moon was bright above,
 The plain was still ! but on the mountain head,
 Unwitness’d of the sleeping multitudes,
 Was warfare such as Spirits wage, and strife
 That shook its rugged sides. Up from the earth
 Where night was thickest, even from the midst
 Of Israel’s tents, rose out a clouded Form
 Most like material Darkness—wander’d forth
 Throughout the camp, and folded evil wings 350
 Across a thunder-ruin’d countenance.

Slowly, as one asham’d, wherever shades
 Lay deep, the fall’n Greatness took its way,
 And up the dark side of the mountain came
 E’en to its hoary summit—standing forth
 At length in the clear light, with hopeless eyes
 Fix’d on the sleeping saint.

But e’er the touch
 Of the lost Spirit could defile that clay,
 Swift as a sunbeam, purer than the light,
 One from above descended—thunder roll’d 360
 And shook the plain ; the pale blank moon went in,
 And darkness veil’d the Spirit-Combatants—
 The mountain quak’d, and ever downward roll’d

The rifted rocks. The sleepers in the camp
 Awoke and pray'd : but Israel's tribes beheld
 Nor gleaming spear nor fiery flashing sword :
 Nor heard by mortal anger, all unmov'd,
 The heav'nly Angel's pure and stern reproof,
 'The Lord rebuke Thee !'

THE SHUNAMITE

PART I

'And he said, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day ? it is
 neither new moon, nor sabbath." And she said, "It shall be well !"'
 —2 Kings iv. 23.

'It shall be well !'

She sent and answer'd him—'*It shall be well*'—
 E'en though her heart, o'erfraught
 With love and agony and burning thought,
 With all a mother's bitter grief might swell,
 She sent and answer'd him, '*It shall be well !*'

What could that message mean ?
 It did not tell how death had come between
 Him and the joy of harvest ; could there rest
 Still in her heaving breast 10
 Hope that the child would waken ? that his head
 Would turn upon the pillow of that bed—
 When the light air came in, that he would sigh,
 Feeling it lift his hair so wooingly ?—
 No ! for she left him : for she left alone
 The silent form, from which the life was flown :—
 Who the deep workings of her soul may tell ?
 Mysterious words ! she said, '*It shall be well !*'

What shall be well ?

His aged father's heart, when he shall call 20
 For his sweet child ? when turn'd at even-fall
 To his own roof, from fields with harvest white,
 No foot shall meet him in the soft dim light,
 But he shall hear the mourning women's cry
 Of death and desolation ? and his eye

Shall fall upon the face for which they wail ?

No ! for it shall be pale !

What then ? thy gentle heart, kind Shunamite ?

No ! for thy sole delight

Hath sobb'd himself to sleep upon thy breast,

30

His dreamless sleep. Then let him take his rest !

Long did thine arms in hope his limbs enfold,

But now they have grown cold !

Who sitteth in the mount apart ? his gaze,

Dream-like, upon the far blue landscape stays—

Green slopes and harvest fields and pastures fair—

But his thoughts are not there !

Across the darken'd mirror of his soul

Thick mists obscuring roll :

And as, when Eli had laid down to sleep,

40

In midnight silence deep,

Before the ark the lamp of God burn'd dim

Shaded with golden wings of Cherubim—

So in the temple of his heart, though nigh

Might Angel-watchers in his pathway lie,

No gleams of light with radiance pure and sweet

Reveal'd the brightness of the Mercy-seat :

As in the hour of midnight gloom, with him

The lamp of God burn'd dim !

Haply prophetic visions, indistinct

50

With wailing voices sounds of trouble link'd—

Haply a shadowing forth of wasting years,

Captivity and tears,

To come upon his nation, or yet more,

It might be that before

His inward sense the ' Man of Sorrows ' rose,

And to him wond'ring did the wounds disclose,

That pierc'd his hands and feet—his soul might see

Shadows of that last night's deep agony ;

Might see One lowly in the garden bend—

60

And words of wond'rous meaning might extend

To him that search'd what tidings these might bring,

Fore-runners of what pure and holy thing—

Yes ! to his soul might reach that bitter cry—

' What, is it nothing, O ye passers by ? '—

‘ Nothing to you these thorns ?—This cursed tree ?—
Behold—Behold and see
If there be any sorrow like to mine ?—
Man’s guilt and wrath Divine ! ’

Or haply on his burden’d soul might press 70
The world’s dull cares—its wants, its weariness—
He hath no fellow—there are none to feel
Like woes with his, and by communion heal.
The idol-worshippers wax strong and bold,
And love hath long grown cold.
What wonder if his voice hath sorrow’s tone ?
He in the midst hath dwelt so long alone :
Or to his lips low pining words may come,
Looking and longing for his distant home !

‘ O that I had wings ! 80
Then would I flee away and be at rest—
I would betake me to the utmost springs
That in the desert rise, and calm my breast
Beside their lonely waters ; I should hear,
About their margins drear,
No hymns to Baal chanted, but above
The sky would smile upon me, and my soul,
Freed from earth’s strong control
And thought that fondly clings
Around forbidden things, 90
Should find a purer outlet for her love—
O that I had wings
Like a dove !

‘ O that I had wings,
I would escape from stormy winds away
And tempests,—from the pain that scoffing brings,
The strife of tongues, from mumbling crowds that pray
By flames unhallow’d, from the weary pain
That frets me for the nation that I love,
From warnings long unheard and teachings vain : 100
I would betake me to a quiet shore
Where billows heave no more—
Would touch the golden strings

Whereto the Seraph sings—
 I would escape unto the courts above—
 O that I had wings
 Like a dove ! ’

PART II

‘ And she said to her servant, “ Drive, and go forward ; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.” ’—2 Kings iv. 24.

So she went on the man of God to meet,
 And pour her bitter tidings at his feet :
 And when he saw her on the mountain’s height,
 He said, in pity for her toilsome way—
 ‘ Behold now—yonder is that Shunamite—
 I pray thee, run to meet her steps—and say—
 Say—“ Is it well with thee ?
 And with thy husband well ?—and with the child ? ” ’
 What should her answer be ?
 She said—‘ It is well ’—but was unbeguil’d 10
 By hope,—she bow’d her to grief’s strong control,
 And in her patience she possess’d her soul !

And he said—‘ What is this ?—
 Hath God to tears of mourning turn’d her bliss ?—
 Let her alone ;
 Her soul is vex’d within her, but the Lord
 No tidings doth afford
 Of this her grief to me !—His goodness shone
 Erewhile upon her head ; the bitter moan
 Of woe was far from her in days of old— 20
 Now, He afflicteth her with all his waves ;
 But me He hath not told :
 The voice of joy is flown—
 She weeps as mothers on their firstborn’s graves,
 Let her alone ! ’

Then she said, ‘ Did I ask of thee a son ?
 Nay ! but I said,
 “ Do not deceive me.” Let the Holy One,
 That poureth out affliction on my head

And mourning, witness between me and thee— 30

I askèd not

Among my people for a happier lot—

Thy handmaid said,

“Do not deceive me !” Prophet, on thy bed
Around my firstborn’s face Death’s shadows fall,
Within the little chamber on the wall !’

O tidings strange to hear !

Too hard, too wonderful for human ear !

Will the Most High

Recall so soon the child that He hath sent ? 40

‘Yet He is not a man that He should lie,

Nor that He should repent !’

The child of prayer—

Her child, who kneeling, wept before him there,

Who, in the kindness of her heart had made

A place of shelter and a welcome shade,

A refuge from the heat,

Rest for his toilworn limbs and weary feet—

Her child was dead ! And yet he turn’d away—

For what could comfort do, or feeling say ? 50

Yet still there was some comfort : strange and wild

Though seem’d the words he utter’d to her heart :

He said unto his servant, ‘Rise, depart,

Gird up thy loins, and lay

My staff upon the forehead of the child !’

‘Take thou my staff, arise and seek

The bosom of the plain—

Him that salutes thee by the way,

Salute thou not again :

Press onward, let thy mission rest 60

Unutter’d and unknown,

And lay my staff upon his face,

Who slumbers there, alone !

‘It may be that my God will see,

And own the mute appeal—

It may be that the hand which smote

Will turn again and heal :

That He, who ever waits to bless,
 Will grant an answer then,
 Who doth not willingly afflict
 Nor grieve the sons of men ! 70

‘ Depart in haste, but not because
 Impatient thoughts would stir
 Within the bosom of the child,
 Though long thou should’st defer.
 He, careless of thy willing foot,
 With young lips clos’d and dumb,
 Alone and silent on his bed,
 Will wait till thou art come.

‘ Yet, take my staff, and let it rest 80
 Upon his pallid face,
 Watch if a pulse it shall awake,
 A start, a sigh, a trace—
 Of aught that tells of life or change,
 If hope may yet remain—
 Then hast’ning on thy backward path,
 Return to me again ! ’

Then he arose,
 And took his master’s staff, and went his way,
 Pass’d on with rapid foot that would not stay 90
 For rest or for repose,
 Or shelter from the heat of that clear harvest day—
 Pass’d on, and reach’d the place,
 And laid the staff upon the dead child’s face ;
 Then listening bent—but *there*
 Was neither voice nor hearing—*there* no tone,
 No look, from sadden’d features still and fair,
 No sigh, lamenting to be left alone—
 No murmur’d accents fall
 Upon his mother’s name in sleep to call— 100
 Nothing but silence round his bed doth brood,
 With death and solitude !

PART III

‘ And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead.’—2 Kings iv. 32.

The child was dead—
 Mute—mute and still he lay upon his bed,
 And on his tender features yet remain’d
 A mournful shadowing of the woe that plain’d—
 ‘ My head—my head ! ’
 The utter languor of the heavy lid
 His dim eyes hid :
 But death hung brooding on the placid cheek
 Declin’d in silence meek,
 And hands, that over-wearied droop’d at rest 10
 Upon the quiet breast.

Was not help vain ?—
 The child was dead !—The dead wake not again !
 Yet he went in to him, and clos’d the door
 Upon them twain—
 Clos’d it, in solitude his soul to pour
 With all its sorrows in that silent place
 Before the dead child’s face !
 The Lord had hidden from His servant’s eyes
 The thing that he had done—and chill surprise 20
 And anguish came upon him, like a cloud—
 And fear and dread, to shroud
 The dark unquiet visions of his soul,
 And doubt awoke, to roll
 Her earthborn mists across his weary heart,
 Bidding prophetic visions high depart.
 And who shall tell what woes his spirit felt
 That mourn’d the loosing of the silver cord,
 What while the living with the dead he knelt
 And prayed before the Lord ? 30

‘ O that I knew Thee ! Darkness veil’d,
 Invisible—Unknown !
 Thy secret hath not been with me—
 Dweller afar—Alone !—

Who shall bend down thine ear to hear
 By strength of mortal oath ?—
 O for a Daysman that might lay
 His hand upon us both !

‘ O that One liv’d to be the Peace,
 And stand before Thy face, 40
 Then would I cry, and Thou should’st hear
 In that Thy dwelling-place.

Withdraw Thy terrors from my soul—
 Searcher of hearts, forgive !

O Father of my spirit, who
 Can feel Thy wrath—and live ?

‘ Behold—I know that I am vile
 In thine all-holy eye,—
 Abase me lower than the dust—
 But hear me when I cry— 50

Was it for this Thy servant’s sin
 Thy hand was rais’d to slay ?—

O show me why Thou dost contend
 And take the child away !

‘ Yea—hear me for Thy people’s sake
 Who Thy compassions share,—

(I number not my lot with theirs,
 Too base such name to bear)—

But if, when they with mercy fill’d
 Shall turn them to their rest— 60

One gleam of love remains—O let
 It reach my darken’d breast !

‘ Dost Thou not love me ?—yea, Thou dost—
 Thou gavest, at my prayer,

A child unto the childless wife,
 Who for my need did care :

Thy kindness passeth human thought,
 That Thou to me hast shown,

Or, long since wearied with my ways,
 It had forgetful grown ! 70

‘ My Father !—near yon sun a cloud
 Hangs from the mountain ledge,
 And sinking low, his golden rays
 Stream through its purple edge :

Erewhile it loom'd a vapour frail,
Dark in the evening sky,—
Fill'd with his beams, it poureth now
Its glory from on high !

‘ Hear me !—Thy love upon my soul
Descending, hath array'd 80

In rays of light her being frail
That once in darkness stray'd.
Fill'd with Thy beams to Thee she turns—
Behold Thy glory there—

Look not on her, but on her robe,
Her garment white and fair.

‘ Look not on her, but on Thine own,
Thy deep unchanging love,
She is no longer mean—adorn'd
With beauty from above. 90

Restore—O Thou that givest strength
The prayer of faith to pour—
By all the blessings of the past—
Giver of life—restore !

‘ By all Thy kindness, by that care
That slumbers not, nor sleeps,
By hope that mercy yet for us
A brighter morning keeps—
By dreams that mystic things unfold,
By visions of the night, 100
Prophetic thoughts that shadow forth
The dawn of purer light.

‘ By Him, that on the plain by night
Our father Jacob met,
Prevailing not, that on his head
A princely blessing set,—
By all his wrestlings, by that voice
Unheard on earth before,
And by his name, reveal'd not yet,
I cry to thee, Restore !’ 110

‘ Restore !’ it echoes still—the prayer, ‘ Restore !’
Or is there other sound,
Some voice that floats around ?
For there is silence in the place no more !

Is it an Angel, sent to minister,
 Whose wings so near him stir ?
 Or does the evening air towards him flow,
 With measur'd murmurs low ?
 Still to the Lord the prophet's hands are spread,
 In supplication strong he bows his head ;— 120
 The answer comes while yet he prays, ' Restore ! '
 And there is silence in the place no more !
 O calm, calm sleep—
 Most holy dreams that those shut eyelids keep
 Held in their gentle thralldom ! O clear eyes,
 Shining through fringes parting—quiet sighs,
 And breathing soft and low !
 ' He is not dead, but sleepeth.' Let them flow,
 Those winds of evening, to his couch, and chase
 The shadowy sadness from his peaceful face ; 130
 Some touch unseen the listless hand hath press'd,
 And it is warm upon the heaving breast !

Asleep, asleep ! This day his soul hath lain
 Hard by the gates of Heav'n, and heard a strain
 Of music, pure and sweet,
 The soon-returning spirit sent to greet,
 And soothe for short delay
 The soul drawn down by pray'r to its frail home of clay !
 Asleep, asleep ! There is a dim regret
 On childlike features yet— 140
 Some faint remembrance of that music past :
 But it is fading fast—
 It passeth !—It is gone ! And sweetly now
 Plays the calm smile upon his cheek and brow—
 The dream departeth, and the eyes uncloze,
 Won back to earth again—
 Forget the rapture of that deep repose,
 That Heav'nly strain !

Hearken—he calleth her, that Shunamite,
 Who in her anguish murmur'd, '*It is well !*' 150
 In darkness sore at noon those accents fell—
 But it is eventide, and there is light—
 Behold he calleth her—for all is won—
 And saith, ' Take up thy son ! '

PART III

The following series of poems has been the result of a friendship with the editor's family. Several of them were particularly intended to commemorate walks and drives in the neighbourhood of the parsonage. [*A Rhyming Chronicle*, published anonymously, was edited by the Rev. Edward Harston, Vicar of Tamworth.]

A WALK TO AMINGTON

ON THE 4TH OF MARCH

'The days of our life are threescore years and ten.'

I

A BIRTHDAY ;—and a day that rose
With much of hope, with meaning rife—
A thoughtful day from dawn to close,
The middle day of human life.

II

In sloping fields, on narrow plains
The sheep were feeding on their knees,
As we went through the winding lanes,
Strew'd with red buds of alder trees.

III

So warm the day,—its influence lent
To flagging thought a stronger wing,
So utterly was winter spent,
So sudden was the birth of spring.

IV

Wild crocus flowers by copse and hedge
In sunlight, clustering thick below,
Sigh'd for the firwood's shaded ledge,
Where sparkled still a line of snow.

V

And crowded snowdrops faintly hung
Their heads yet lower for the heat,
While in still air all branches flung
Their shadowy doubles at our feet.

VI

And through the hedge the sunbeams crept,
And through the maple and the birch ;
And in the airy distance slept,
On the broad tower of Tamworth Church.

VII

Then lingering on our downward way,
A little space we stay'd and stood,
To see the hazy mist that lay
Down in that vale, and by the wood.

VIII

A distance vague, a dreamy calm
The constant sun had lent the scene ;
And dropt a soft and veiling charm
On broomy knolls and dingles green.

IX

There are some days that die not out,
Nor alter by reflection's power ;
Whose converse calm, whose words devout,
For ever rest the spirit's dower

X

And they are days when drops a veil,
A mist upon the distance past ;
And while we say to peace—' All hail ! '
We hope that it will always last—

XI

Times when the troubles of the heart
Are hush'd—as winds were hush'd that day ;
And budding hopes begin to start,
Like those green hedgerows on our way—

XII

When all within and all around,
Like hues on that sweet landscape, blend ;
And Nature's hand has made to sound
The echoes that our heartstrings send—

XIII

When there are rays within, like those
 That stream'd through maple and through birch ;
 And rested in such calm repose
 On the broad tower of Tamworth Church.

TO KATIE, ASLEEP IN THE DAYTIME

' Three years she grew in sun and shower,
 Then Nature said, " A lovelier flower
 On earth was never sown :
 This child I to myself will take,
 She shall be mine, and I will make
 A Lady of my own ! " '

WORDSWORTH.

I

LITTLE Katie, when your mother
 Sees you sleeping on your bed,
 Golden hair upon your pillow
 Halo-like around you spread ;
 List'ning to your gentle breathing,
 Bending down to catch the sighs,
 And the sleepy words you murmur
 When the light is on your eyes :

II

When she hears your little footsteps
 Running on their devious way,
 Sees you with your waxen baby
 Hold a never-wearied play :
 And with mimic care attend it,
 And in loving tones caress,
 Fond and tender words repeating
 That your own sweet childhood bless :

III

When she holds you to her bosom,
 Looking on your dimpled smile,
 There is ' love that passeth knowledge ',
 Working in her heart the while :

And she thinks, ' Whatever sorrow
 One day in my path may be,
 And whatever cares may trouble,
 O this same shall comfort me ! '

IV

Little Katie, when your father
 First beheld your open eyes,
 Strange delight was in his blessing,
 Half incredulous surprise.
 Only daughter ! There is magic
 Surely in a daughter's name,
 And the gladness of your birthday
 Growing still, is still the same.

V

Little Katie, when your laughter
 Rises sweetly to his ear,
 Do you know what thoughts it wakens
 Of a voice no longer here ?
 Do you know how much you tell him,
 In its clear and joyful tone,
 Of lov'd accents that it echoes,
 And of features like your own ?

VI

When you come with baby footsteps,
 When you cling about his chair,
 And he parts from off your forehead
 The soft curls of veiling hair :
 Sometimes, looking down, remembrance
 Of another face doth rise,
 And he sees, but heeds no longer,
 Thinking on those buried eyes,—

VII

On *her* face, that now lies cover'd
 With a mantle green and fair,
 Where at sundown falls the shadow
 Of a distant house of prayer :
 At whose feet the young tree flourish'd
 Ere you came, an infant guest,
 One, to whom her name descended,
 And her welcome in his breast.

VIII

What if more be gather'd shortly,
 If they go to join her there,
 Will you fill their vacant places
 With your watchful love and care ?
 Will you learn the silent language
 Dimly written on his brow,
 Minister to wants unspoken,
 To unutter'd wishes bow ?

IX

It is much if love attend us,
 Something to be understood :
 More, if heedful thoughts be on us,
 Always waiting for our good.
 Kindness, more than precious jewels
 Or than ornaments of gold,
 Beautifies a woman's beauty,
 Gives her grace when she grows old.

X

For the sister-voice that never
 With his household music blends,
 For that lost delight of childhood
 Will you make his heart amends ?
 Till he says, ' In all my labours,
 Long and toilsome though they be,
 And for all remember'd sorrows,
 Now this same doth comfort me ! '

XI

* * * *

XII

* * * *

XIII

Pleasure, like that ray of glory
 By the ancient painters shed
 Round some pictur'd fond resemblance
 Of the dear Redeemer's head,

In the loom of life doth pleasure,
 Ere our childish days are told,
 With the warp and woof enwoven,
 Glitter like a thread of gold !

XIV

Be not anxious to discover,
 Questioning with curious thought,
 Why in life's embroider'd tissue
 Should this golden thread be wrought :
 Nor, as some have done before you,
 In the midst of joyous play,
 Wonder why you are so happy,
 And how soon 'twill pass away !

XV

Pass it surely will, and early—
 Thoughtless pleasures will not last ;
 Things that perish in the using—
 Morning rime that melteth fast.
 But, instead, will come perceptions
 Of a nature more intense ;
 Conscious joys—but care-attended,
 Growing up with thought and sense :

XVI

Things our Childhood did not dream on
 While she linger'd with us still,
 Making necklaces of daisies—
 Sailing fleets along the rill :
 She is gone ! and with her vanish'd
 Much that fancy well may rue,
 Theories that shrink from proving,
 And beliefs no longer true.

XVII

Then there comes a feeling common
 To the disenchanted heart,
 As it thinks how marvel ceaseth,
 And from earth how wonders part.
 ' Miracles have long been over,
 All things follow changeless rule,—
 Angels stir not now the waters
 Of Bethesda's desert pool.

XVIII

‘ Men forget the worlds above them,
 And can see no signs in Heav’n
 Art has almost put out Nature
 With her deep insidious leav’n :
 And our God withdraws His presence,
 While perverse, in harden’d mood
 Live the Tribes that once He nourish’d,
 Forty years on Angels’ food.’

XIX

So doth Youth—from fables rising—
 Fashion out of all she sees,
 Even from this world’s condition,
 Fellow thoughts and sympathies :
 Even Nature’s face we colour
 With the mind’s prevailing tone,
 Change her language to a cadence,
 Harmonizing with our own !

XX

Thought is free, the sages tell us—
 Free to rove, and free to soar,
 But affection lives in bondage,
 That enthralls her more and more :
 From her utmost branch she sendeth,
 Downward like the Indian tree,
 Roots that with the earth connect her,
 Strongly and enduringly.

XXI

Yet, alas ! for something better—
 Love is such a helpless thing—
 Poor as earthly gold and silver,
 Life to buy, or peace to bring.
 Like a woman empty-handed,
 Weeping for her children’s need,
 Love can heal no pang it mourneth,
 Nor her tears the children feed !

XXII

Then our envy turns upon us—
 ‘What! and would’st thou purchase rest
 By the drying up of feeling,
 By love’s cooling in thy breast?
 No! thou would’st not! why complain then.
 Simple reasoner that thou art?
 How shall these two dwell together—
 Quiet life and loving heart?’

XXIII

There is no such thing as silence,
 Sleepless echoes round us wait,
 Every sound we can interpret
 Makes it bear on ev’ry state:
 Absent voices crowd about us,
 Talking with us by the way;
 Faces that the grave has cover’d
 Look upon us all the day.

XXIV

And their words are not reproachful,
 Though we sometimes wish they were,
 Pain’d for every past unkindness,
 That from us they had to bear.
 Many needless things are spoken,
 (Words to folly near akin)
 Rather than in silence listen
 To those voices from within!

XXV

Little Katie, when your childhood
 Passeth, like a dream of night,
 Then may youth arise unclouded—
 Like a summer morning bright.
 Having left no absent voices
 Any cause to pain you thus—
 Live to hear from all who love you
 ‘O this same doth comfort us!’

HOPWAS WOOD AT THE END OF APRIL

NEVER tell me how the sun
 Steeps the meadow lands in light ;
 Stealthy entrance he hath won
 Here to drop his star-beams bright.

Changing fretwork here he lays
 On the mosses and the grass ;
 In and out his prying rays
 Dash and dart, and gleam and pass.

Under woven branches high,
 Down upon the wood-ruffe's head,
 Little spots of sunshine lie,
 Wandering patches change and spread.

Here the chaffinch and his mate
 Build themselves ' a mansion small ' ;
 Starlings sit in chattering state,
 And the jealous thrushes call.

Shall I tell you what they say,
 Singing for their own delight ?
 Listen to the linnet's lay
 In the chestnut out of sight.

' O my mate with snowy breast,
 And with eyes so bright and black,
 Fear not for thy mossy nest,
 Leafy shade it doth not lack.

' Sam and Henry did not see,
 When to-day they play'd below—
 Of the treasure in the tree
 Sam and Henry did not know.

' Safe from reach of spoiler's hand,
 Sit and dream with half-shut eyes ;
 Drowsy moths about thee stand,
 And blue panting dragon-flies.

‘ While the chestnut blossoms fall
Thickly on thy nest and thee,
Dusky bees and beetles small
Hum around thee restlessly.

‘ When the rising sun shall peep
At our nestlings laid in down,
Sam and Henry fast asleep
Shall not dream it in the town.

‘ In the topmost branch enshrin’d,
Look abroad on meadows fair
And in soft grey moss reclin’d,
Think upon thy speckled care.

‘ Green beyond thee lies the ridge,
That yon gloomy fir-trees crown ;
And the river and the bridge,
And the road into the town.

‘ Sunk in rushes to their breasts,
Village boys thy bright eye kens,
Wading after ousels’ nests,
And the eggs of waterhens.

‘ Little isles where osiers grow
Stem and fret the shallow tide ;
There the white swans floating go,
With the grey one at their side.

‘ And, their arms together link’d,
Witch-elms hang above the well ;
While in quietness distinct
Sounds the tinkling chapel bell.

‘ Fear not thou, but dream at ease,
Shut thy glossy wings and rest ;
While the balmy southern breeze
Sways thee gently on thy nest.

‘ When the moon-beams through the tree,
On thy first-laid egg came down,
Sam and Henry did not see,
Fast asleep in Tamworth Town.’

This was what the linnet said,
 Singing of his own delight,
 And the happy life he led
 In the chestnut out of sight.

July, 1847.

CHANTREY'S SNOW-DROPS

(IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL)

MARVELS of sleep, grown cold !
 Who hath not long'd to fold,
 With pitying grief, forgetful of their bliss,
 Those cherub forms that lie
 With none to watch them nigh,
 Or touch the silent lips with one warm human kiss ?
 What ! they are left alone
 All night with graven stone,
 Pillars and arches that above them meet,
 While through those windows high
 The journeying stars can spy,
 And dim blue moonbeams drop on their uncover'd feet !
 O cold ! Yet look again,
 There is a wandering vein,
 Trac'd in the hand where those white snowdrops lie.
 Let her rapt dreamy smile
 The wond'ring heart beguile,
 That almost thinks to hear a calm contented sigh.
 What silence dwells between
 Those sever'd lips serene,
 Revealing how her dream most sweetly flows !
 What trance-like peace is shed
 On the reclining head,
 And e'en on listless feet what languor of repose !
 Angels of peace and love
 Lean towards her from above,
 And talk with her of sweet and wond'rous things—
 Tell of the golden gate
 That, open'd wide, doth wait,
 And shadow her dim sleep with their celestial wings.

Hearing of that blest shore,
She thinks on earth no more,
Contented to forgo this wintry land :
Yet turns, with meek caress
The sister form to press,
And hold the snow-drops pale, that blossom in her hand.

Lay thy head down in peace,
And take thy fill of ease,
As on a pillow well beseeeming it :
Thou hast nor thought nor care,
But to rest calmly there,
Nor rouse thy sleepy eyes from that long dreaming fit.

But on the other face
Broodeth a mournful grace,
She had foreboding thoughts beyond her years,
As, sinking to this sleep,
She saw her mother weep,
And could not lift her hand to dry those heart-sick
tears—

Could not—but failing, lay,
Sigh'd her young life away,
And let her arm drop down in listless rest,
Too weary, on that bed
To turn her dying head,
Or fold the little sister nearer to her breast.

Yet this is faintly told
On features fair and cold—
A look of calm surprise, of meek regret,
As if with sleep oppress'd
She turn'd her to her rest,
And in an endless dream her mother watch'd her yet.

How wistfully they close,
Those eyes to their repose !
How quietly declines the placid brow !
The young lips seem to say,
' I have wept much to-day,
And felt some bitter pains, but they are over now.'

Sleep ! There are left below
 Many who pine to go—
 Many who lay it to their chast'ned souls,
 That gloomy days draw nigh,
 And they are blest who die,
 For this green world grows worse the longer that she rolls.

And even I who know
 But little of its woe,
 Can take from other hearts into my own
 Reflected griefs, that bring,
 With every tear they wring,
 Knowledge that love must seek for peace in Heav'n alone.

THE PARSONAGE GARDEN

WITHIN these walls has much been done, and much has
 been effac'd,
 For each successor makes a change in what the last had
 trac'd :
 Old-fashion'd plants and flowers are thrown aside in
 high disdain,
 And dwellers next to these perhaps will alter it again.

When the grave old Friars went two and two along the
 broad straight walks ;
 When the orange lily and the flag uprear'd their stately
 stalks,
 By beds where herb-angelica and feathery fennels grew,
 Sweet marjoram, and basil green, and mint, and balm,
 and rue—

O they little thought, as side by side, with sleek and
 sober pace,
 They talk'd of holy Mother Church, and of our Lady's
 grace,
 That on a day their garden trim so gay a dress would don,
 And children's feet would tread its walks, when they
 were dead and gone.

But if their gambols and their joy those grave old Friars
could see,
They would hardly give those children dear their
'Benedicite'—
Those little heretics that plant and dig their garden
small,
In what was once the bed of herbs beneath the ancient
wall.

They would look askance at once trim beds, where
double daisies stood,
And groan to find them fill'd with docks and bluebells
from the wood ;
While the owners delve with might and main in gravel,
mould, and clay ;
And give their minds to that hard work and toil that
boys call play.

They would look askance at the arbour nigh, where
haply they might see
A student grave with a dimpled cheek, and a book upon
his knee ;
A-reading of Aladdin's Lamp, or famous Robin Hood,
Of simple Susan and her lamb, or the Children in the
Wood.

Perhaps where green the terrace bank slopes downward
to the grass,
Where to her school the mistress now doth every morning
pass,
Or where the nurse walks up and down with children at
her knees,
Grew beds of borage long ago, to feed the Friars' bees.

Perhaps where this young sycamore waves lightly over-
head,
The Friars stood to give away the weekly dole of bread ;
And thought to reach the gates of Heaven, by that more
easy way,
And make themselves a name on earth, that never should
decay.

This ancient wall of all their works is standing now alone;
With here a range of rugged bricks, and there a rough-
hewn stone.

O! well for us that little more doth of their works
remain!

O! sad would be the day that saw the Friars here again!

HOPWAS WOOD AT THE END OF MAY

I HAD a dream last night, a pleasant dream,
After the busy day,
Full of delightful thoughts of many things,
And places far away.

A dream, my Mother, of that quiet wood,
To some blest souls akin;
Round which, though stormy winds may pine and
rave,
They cannot come within.

Methought I enter'd by the mossy gate,
And went up all alone,
Where, thick as stars upon a frosty night,
The primrose flowers were strewn—

Among the arums and the prone woodbine,
Through bushy broom and heath,
Where spiral grass peer'd through the last year's
leaves,
That rustled underneath.

And further down into the deepest glades,
Where lady-ferns grew high,
And where a few long sunbeams cross'd the slopes,
And glimmer'd quietly.

And where blue egg-shells on the ground were strew'd,
And golden king-cups shone,
I went, and thought how seldom in my life
I had been quite alone.

It was a pleasant thought to be shut in,
 Whatever winds might rise,
 Shelter'd and safe, with matted boughs o'er head,
 And hid from human eyes.

Among the silver birch trees and the oaks,
 Down to the quiet stream,
 In light sent down through half-transparent leaves,
 I wander'd in my dream.

And heard the birds that sat apart and sang,
 Each from his leafy spray—
 Notes, cheerful as the sound of morning bells,
 That ring in Christmas day.

They never stopp'd, but sent among the trees
 Their voices clear and strong ;
 While humming insects kept throughout my way
 An endless under-song.

There was an osier basket in my hand,
 And I had fill'd it well
 With spotted orchis flowers and woodruffe sweet
 And ' dewy asphodel ' ;

Brown cones from larches dropt, wood-sorrels red,
 And mosses green and grey,
 And blue-barr'd feathers that in chase had fallen
 From wing of chattering jay.

So, come at last to a most shady dell,
 Where pines and larches stood,
 I knew how broadly shone upon their heads
 The sun above the wood.

Though underneath among their sloping boughs,
 That bending low did meet,
 A soft green twilight made the summer noon
 Like evening, dim and sweet.

And in my dream reclining on the moss,
 With daisy buds o'erlaid,
 Methought I saw two of the fairy folk
 Down walking in the shade—

Two fairy dames, no taller than a span,
 With hair of golden hue ;
 And, as the skies upon a summer day,
 Their open eyes were blue.

They did not look at me, but as they went,
 In voice as small and sweet
 As the slight humming of the laden bee,
 With pollen-covered feet—

I heard one fairy speak of me, and say,
 ‘ How found she then so soon
 This place where little crested wrens resort,
 To keep their honeymoon ? ’

‘ She ’s only dreaming,’ said the answering voice,
 ‘ She is not truly here,
 For she has made no footprints in the moss,
 Nor bent the branches near.

‘ O these immortals often live and die,
 And leave no trace behind—
 Not in one place that they have trodden here,
 Nor one yet living mind.

‘ She ’s dreaming, and her life is half a dream,
 Leave her in peace alone,
 The daughters of her race dream much and oft
 Of things to us unknown.’

So wending on, they soon pass’d out of view
 The antler’d ferns between,
 With snowy robes and mystic girdles rare,
 And gentle pace serene.

And I, with thoughts perplex’d, suspicions vague,
 That these things did but *seem*,
 Was only half surpris’d to see YOU stand
 Beside me in my dream.

And I said, ‘ Mother, is there nothing real ?
 Truly I cannot tell—
 Perhaps I never saw this wood before,
 I seem to know so well.

‘ Perhaps there is not such a place on earth—
 If now I sleep, again
 I may awake and utterly forget,
 And lose it from my brain.

‘ Perhaps I never saw these woodbine wreaths,
 The sapling oaks that span,
 Nor heard the wind awaken on its path
 These notes Aeolian.

‘ And yet it seems to me in this same place,
 That looking down the glade,
 We waited till the books were brought, and read,
 Here, in this pleasant shade.

‘ What was it that those fairy people said ?
 Their voices haunt me still,
 I see there are no human footprints trac’d
 Upon this sloping hill.

‘ Of those who trod a hundred years ago
 These paths, the woods are dumb—
 O, will they be for these dear friends of mine
 A hundred years to come ?

‘ The place is gleaming with this sunny sheen,
 With songs of thrushes sweet,
 The shadows of the leaves with flickerings light
 Are dancing at my feet ;

‘ As on an April day not long ago
 They waver’d in the wind,
 While we sat listening to that Roman tale,
 Beneath the trees reclin’d.

‘ But summer has forgotten spring, and wears
 Than hers a fairer face,
 The morning has forgotten night, and bears
 Of her lost stars no trace.

‘ The goldfinch has forgot his last year’s mate,
 With this as well content,
 The hare forgets her full-grown leveret’s fate,
 And heeds not where he went.

‘ And the forgetful woods, now birds are come,
 Repeat *their* voices clear,
 And keep no echo of that Roman tale,
 That once was taught them here.

‘ And when those listeners thread these paths no more,
 The birds will still be gay,
 Spring will forget them, and their names shall melt
 Like wintry snows away.’

And then methought you spoke to me, and said,
 ‘ E’en such shall be their lot !
 Yet though the present must forget the past,
 And be in turn forgot—

‘ Though the unborn a hundred years to come
 Know not their place of rest,
 Though Earth forget her buried children, laid
 To sleep in her cold breast—

‘ What will it matter to the souls in bliss,
 That, gather’d to their fold,
 Abide upon the everlasting hills,
 And blest communion hold ?

‘ Safe in a city that no light doth need
 From sun, nor moon, nor star,
 Where souls redeem’d of martyrs and of saints,
 And kings and prophets are—

‘ A city where no sighing is, nor tears,
 Nor fear of death affrays,
 Whose ‘ walls ’ are call’d ‘ salvation to the Lord ’,
 And all whose ‘ gates ’ are ‘ praise ’.

‘ To whose inhabitants their wanderings here,
 And lives on earth may seem,
 With all their thoughts and changes manifold,
 No longer than a dream—

‘ “ A dream when one awaketh ! ” ’ and with this
 I thought you turn’d away,
 And with a sigh I suddenly awoke,
 And found that it was day.

And through my curtains slanting to the wall,
 Came down a golden beam,
 As partly pleas'd and partly pain'd, I knew
 That this too was a dream.

A HYMN OF SUPPLICATION

I

LIGHT of the world, when gloomy fears oppress,
 When darkness shrouds us here,
 Shine, and the desolate with comfort bless,
 The sad in spirit cheer.
 Break through the clouds, thy smile on earth shall be
 As Heaven on earth begun—
 Arise, thy beams of mercy let us see,
 O God our Sun !
 Fort of defence, whereto in ages past
 Thy saints for safety fled,
 Be thou a shelter from the stormy blast,
 From snares around us spread.
 Be still a refuge for the weary feet
 Of this thy praying flock ;
 Be unto us a shadow from the heat,
 O God, our rock !

A HYMN OF PRAISE

II

BECAUSE thine only Son thou didst not spare,
 But sent him down to die,
 Great King of Heaven, didst yet for rebels care.
 And bring the aliens nigh—
 Therefore thy sovereign bounty we will praise,
 And of thy mercies sing,
 Telling of this thy love through endless days,
 O God our King !
 Because Thou dost thy gracious care bestow,
 And thy protecting arm
 Extend to us in every time of woe,
 Of danger and alarm—

We will make mention of thy glorious name,
To Thee our praises yield—
Thou art a refuge ever found the same,
O God our Shield.

Because Thou hast prepar'd for us a place,
Where toil and turmoil cease,
Where strife must flee away before thy face,
And conflict change to peace—
We will remember this thy love, and pray,
' Father, thy name be blest,
Hasten the dawning of Redemption's day,
O God our Rest ! '

Because thy grace Thou didst to us extend,
And bid us sinners live,
Because Thou wilt preserve us to the end,
And thy free spirit give—
Therefore with angels will we praise thy name,
Before thy footstool fall,
And raise our songs to thee with loud acclaim,
O God our All !

HENRY

AGED SEVEN YEARS

YELLOW leaves, how fast they flutter—woodland hollows
thickly strewing,
Where the wan October sunbeams scanty in the
mid-day win,
While the dim grey clouds are drifting, and in sadden'd
hues embuing
All without and all within !

All within ! but winds of autumn, little Henry, round
their dwelling
Did not load your father's spirit with those deep and
burden'd sighs ;—
Only echo'd thoughts of sadness, in your mother's bosom
swelling,
Fast as tears that dim her eyes.

Life is fraught with many changes, check'd with sorrow
and mutation,

But no grief it ever lighten'd such a truth before to
know :—

I behold them—father, mother—as they seem'd to
contemplation,

Only three short weeks ago !

Sadden'd for the morrow's parting—up the stairs at
midnight stealing—

As with cautious foot we glided past the children's
open door,

—' Come in here ' they said, the lamplight dimpled forms
at rest revealing,

' Kiss them in their sleep once more.'

You were sleeping, little Henry, with your eyelids
scarcely closing,

Two sweet faces near together, with their rounded
arms entwin'd :—

And the rosebud lips were moving, as if stirr'd in their
reposing

By the movements of the mind !

And your mother smooth'd the pillow, and her sleeping
treasures number'd,

Whispering fondly—' He is dreaming '—as you turn'd
upon your bed—

And your father stoop'd to kiss you, happy dreamer, as
you slumber'd,

With his hand upon your head !

Did he know the true deep meaning of his blessing ? No !
he never

Heard afar the summons utter'd—' Come up hither '—
never knew

How the awful Angel faces kept his sleeping boy for
ever,

And for ever in their view.

Awful Faces, unimpassion'd, silent Presences were by us,
Shrouding wings—majestic beings—hidden by this
earthly veil—

Such as we have call'd on, saying, 'Praise the Lord,
O Ananias,

Azarias and Misael !'

But we saw not, and who knoweth, what the mission'd
Spirits taught him,

To that one small bed drawn nearer, when we left him
to their will ?

While he slumber'd, who can answer for what dreams
they may have brought him,

When at midnight all was still ?

Father ! Mother ! must you leave him on his bed, but
not to slumber ?

Are the small hands meekly folded on his breast, but
not to pray ?

When you count your children over, must you tell
a different number,

Since that happier yesterday ?

It was well then, since this must be, that the Angels
stood before him,

To enfold the ransom'd spirit, newly enter'd into rest—
From his mother's mournful bosom, from his father's
prayer they bore him,

Safe to his Redeemer's breast.

Father ! Mother ! weep if need be, since this is a 'time'
for weeping,

Comfort comes not for the calling, grief is never
argued down—

Coldly sounds the admonition, 'Why lament ? in better
keeping

Rests the child than in your own.'

'Truth indeed ! but, oh ! compassion ! Have you
sought to scan my sorrow ?'

(Mother, you shall meekly ponder, list'ning to that
common tale,)

Does your heart repeat its echo, or by fellow-feeling
borrow

Ev'n a tone that might avail ?

' Might avail to steal it from me, by its deep heart-
warm affection ?

Might perceive by strength of loving how the fond
words to combine ?

Surely no ! I will be silent, in your soul is no reflection
Of the care that burdens mine ! '

When the winter twilight gathers, Father, and your
thoughts shall wander,

Sitting lonely you shall blend him with your listless
reveries,

Half forgetful what division holds the form whereon you
ponder

From its place upon your knees—

With a start of recollection, with a half-reproachful
wonder,

Of itself the heart shall question, ' Art Thou then no
longer here ?

Is it so, my little Henry ? Are we set so far asunder
Who were wont to be so near ? '

While the firelight dimly flickers, and the lengthen'd
shades are meeting,

To itself the heart shall answer, ' Never more, oh !
never more

I shall hear without, his footsteps, nor the child's sweet
voice entreating

For admission at my door ! '

But upon *your* fair, fair forehead, no regrets nor griefs
are dwelling,

Neither sorrow nor disquiet do the peaceful features
know ;

Nor that look, whose wistful beauty seem'd their sad
hearts to be telling,

' Daylight breaketh, let me go ! '

Daylight breaketh, little Henry ; in its beams your soul
awaketh—

What though night should close around us, dim and
dreary to the view—

Though *our* souls should walk in darkness, far away that
morning breaketh

Into endless day for you !

Monday, October 15, 1849.

SAMUEL

AGED NINE YEARS

THEY have left you, little Henry, but they have not left
you lonely—

Brothers' hearts so knit together could not, might not
separate dwell,

Fain to seek you in the mansions far away—One linger'd
only

To bid those behind farewell !

Gentle Boy !—His child-like nature in most guileless
form was moulded,

And it may be that his spirit woke in glory unawares,
Since so calmly he resign'd it, with his hands still meekly
folded,

Having said his evening prayers.

Or—if conscious of that summons—' Speak, O Lord,
Thy servant heareth '—

As one said, whose name they gave him, might his
willing answer be,

' Here am I '—like him replying—' At Thy gates my
soul appeareth,

For behold Thou calledst me ! '

A deep silence—utter silence, on his earthly home
descendeth :—

Reading, playing, sleeping, waking—he is gone, and
few remain !

' O the loss '—they utter weeping—every voice its echo
lendeth—

' O the loss ! '—But, O the gain !

On that tranquil shore his spirit was vouchsaf'd an early
landing,

Lest the toils of crime should stain it, or the thrall
of guilt control—

Lest that ' wickedness should alter the yet simple under-
standing,

Or deceit beguile his soul ! '

‘ Lay not up on earth thy treasure ’—they have read
that sentence duly,

Moth and rust shall fret thy riches—earthly good
hath swift decay—

‘ Even so,’ each heart replieth—‘ As for me, my riches
truly

Make them wings and flee away ! ’

‘ O my riches !—O my children !—dearest part of life
and being,

Treasures look’d to for the solace of this life’s declin-
ing years,—

Were our voices cold to hearing—or our faces cold to
seeing,

That ye left us to our tears ? ’

‘ Rolling time and God’s good blessing twin’d for us
a wreath of roses,

Seven rosebuds bloom’d upon it—none else knew how
sweet they were :

Comes the blast—the buds lie scatter’d—e’en the
sweetest fades and closes—

Cherish’d buds, ye promis’d fair ! ’

‘ Fast a Heavenly Hand is twining now again those buds
together,

(Broken wreath of home, too precious to adorn an
earthly brow !)

Wrought into a fairer chaplet, blooming safe from
wintry weather,

They await our advent now.’

‘ We inherit conscious silence, ceasing of some merry
laughter,

And the hush of two sweet voices—(healing sounds
for spirits bruised !)

Of the tread of joyous footsteps in the pathway following
after,

Of two names no longer used ! ’

Question for them, little Sister, in your sweet and
childish fashion—

Search and seek them, Baby Brother, with your calm
and asking eyes—

Dimpled lips that fail to utter fond appeal or sad compassion,

Mild regret or dim surprise !

When the words above you graven, speak the sorrow of the living,

When the passers by shall read them, and behold your early doom,

They shall sigh, and say—‘ God comfort, with the peace of His own giving,

Those who laid them in this tomb !

‘ And God soothe their mother’s sorrow, heal the sharp, keen pain of parting ’—

(Many a mother’s voice shall utter, when her feet approach the place)

‘ Whisper comfort to her spirit—dry those mournful tears, that starting

Dim the brightness of her face ! ’

There are two tall trees above you, by the high east window growing,

Underneath them, slumber sweetly, lapt in silence deep, serene ;

Save when pealing in the distance organ notes towards you flowing.

Echo—with a pause between !

And that pause ?—a voice shall fill it—tones that bless’d you daily, nightly,

Well belov’d, but not sufficing, Sleepers, to awake you now,

Though so near he stand, that shadows from your trees may tremble lightly

On his book and on his brow !

Sleep then ever ! Neither singing of sweet birds shall break your slumber,

Neither fall of dew, nor sunshine, dance of leaves, nor drift of snow,

Charm those dropt lids more to open, nor the tranquil bosoms cumber

With one care for things below !

It is something, the assurance, that *you* ne'er shall feel
like sorrow,

Weep no past and dread no future—know not sigh-
ing—feel not pain—

Nor a day that looketh forward to a mournfuller to-
morrow—

‘ Clouds returning after rain ! ’

It shall never be *your* portion, like your father's and your
mother's,

To keep watch by infant pillows, and receive the
parting sigh—

And to dread that Angel-waiters for the spirits of your
brothers

Draw yet nigher and more nigh !

In the strain of anguish'd feeling, this one thought shall
breathe of healing,

Though their feet be sorely wearied by the roughness
of the way—

And your father and your mother thus shall comfort
one the other,

In this dark and gloomy day :—

Your day breaketh, precious children, in its beams each
soul awaketh—

What though night be closing round us, dark and
dreary to the view—

Though the light *our* eyes forsaketh—clear and sweet
afar it breaketh

Into endless day for you ! ’

October 29, 1849.

KATIE, AGED FIVE YEARS

[ASLEEP IN JESUS]

ALL rough winds are hush'd and silent, golden light
the meadow steepeth,

And the last October roses daily wax more pale and
fair ;

They have laid a gather'd blossom on the breast of one
who sleepeth

With a sunbeam on her hair.

Calm, and drap'd in snowy raiment she lies still, as one
that dreameth,

And a grave sweet smile hath parted dimpled lips that
may not speak ;

Slanting down, that narrow sunbeam like a ray of glory
gleameth

On the sainted brow and cheek.

There is silence ! They who watch her, speak no word
of grief or wailing,

In a strange unwonted calmness they gaze on and
cannot cease,

Though the pulse of life beat faintly, thought shrink
back, and hope be failing,

They, like Aaron, ' hold their peace.'

While they gaze on her, the deep bell with its long slow
pauses soundeth ;

They are silent—father—mother—love has nothing
more to say :

Beating time to feet of Angels leading her where love
aboundeth

Tolls the heavy bell this day.

In their hearts, to its deep tolling, they count over all
her meetness

To lie near their hearts and soothe them in all sorrows
and all fears ;

Her short life lies spread before them, but they cannot
tell her sweetness,

Easily as tell her years.

Only daughter—Ah ! how fondly Thought around that
lost name lingers,
Oft when lone your mother sitteth, she shall weep
and droop her head,
She shall mourn her baby-sempstress, with those
imitative fingers,
Drawing out her aimless thread.

In your father's Future cometh many a sad uncheer'd
to-morrow,
But in sleep shall three fair faces heavenly-calm
towards him lean—
Like a three-fold cord shall draw him through the
weariness of sorrow,
Nearer to the things unseen.

They *must* spare you, little Katie, with that smile of
God's own giving,
Side by side with your sweet brothers in one grave
must make you room ;
Cover your exceeding beauty—more than beauty of the
living—
With the shadows of the tomb !

With the closing of your eyelids close the dreams of
expectation,
And so ends the fairest chapter in the records of
their way :
Therefore—O thou God most holy—God of rest and
consolation,
Be Thou near to them this day !

Be Thou near, when they shall nightly, by the bed of
infant brothers,
Hear their soft and gentle breathing, and shall bless
them on their knees ;
And shall think how coldly falleth the white moonlight
on the others,
In their bed beneath the trees.

Be Thou near, when they, they *only*, bear those faces in
 remembrance,
And the number of their children strangers ask them
 with a smile ;
And when other child-like faces touch them by the strong
 resemblance
 To those turn'd to them erewhile.

Be Thou near, each chasten'd Spirit for its course and
 conflict nerving,
Let Thy voice say, ' Father—mother—lo ! thy
 treasures live above !
Now be strong, be strong, no longer cumber'd overmuch
 with serving
 At the shrine of human love.'

Let them sleep ! In course of ages e'en the Holy House
 shall crumble,
And the broad and stately steeple one day bend to
 its decline,
And high arches, ancient arches bow'd and deck'd in
 clothing humble
 Creeping moss shall round them twine.

Ancient arches, old and hoary, sunny beams shall glimmer
 through them,
And invest them with a beauty we would fain they
 should not share,
And the moonlight slanting down them, the white
 moonlight shall embue them
 With a sadness dim and fair.

Then the soft green moss shall wrap you, and the world
 shall all forget you,
Life, and stir, and toil, and tumult unawares shall
 pass you by ;
Generations come and vanish : but it shall not grieve
 nor fret you,
 That they sin, or that they sigh.

And the world, grown old in sinning, shall deny her
first beginning,

And think scorn of words which whisper how that all
must pass away ;

Time's arrest and intermission shall account a vain
tradition,

And a dream, the reckoning day !

'Till His blast, a blast of terror, shall awake in shame
and sadness

Faithless millions to a vision of the failing earth and
skies,

And more sweet than song of Angels' in their shout of
joy and gladness,

Call the dead in Christ to rise !

Then, by One Man's intercession, standing clear from
their transgression,

Father—mother—you shall meet them fairer than
they were before,

And have joy with the Redeemèd, joy ear hath not
heard—heart dreamèd,

Ay for ever—evermore !

November 3, 1849.

THE END

NOTES

[1867]

ANY Song or Verses from these Poems may be set to music, and published with it. No further permission is necessary.

THE DREAMS THAT CAME TRUE.—P. 163.

This story I first wrote in prose, and it was published some years ago.

A STORY OF DOOM.—P. 225.

The name of the patriarch's wife is intended to be pronounced Nigh-loi-ya.

Of the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japhet, I have called Japhet the youngest (because he is always named last), and have supposed that, in the genealogies where he is called 'Japhet the elder', he may have received the epithet because by that time there were younger Japhets.

A STORY OF DOOM.—P. 270.

The quivering butterflies in companies,
That slowly crept adown the sandy marge,
Like *living crocus beds*.

This beautiful comparison is taken from *The Naturalist on the River Amazon*. 'Vast numbers of orange-coloured butterflies congregated on the moist sands. They assembled in densely-packed masses, sometimes two or three yards in circumference, their wings all held in an upright position, so that the sands looked as though variegated with *beds of crocuses*.'

GLADYS AND HER ISLAND.—P. 307.

The woman is Imagination ; she is brooding over what she brought forth.

The two purple peaks represent the domains of Poetry and of History.

The girl is Fancy.

WINSTANLEY.—P. 338.

This ballad has been published before ; it was intended to be one of a set, and was read to the children in the National Schools at Sherborne, Dorsetshire, in order to discover whether, if the actions of a hero were simply and plainly narrated, English children would like to learn the verses recording them, by heart, as their forefathers did.

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